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Under the Hermés

Under the Hermés

and other Stories

4P 342

By

Richard Dehan

Author of
"The Dop Doctor," etc.

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TO

THE DEAR MEMORY OF

A. R.

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UNDER THE HERMÉS

I

"Miss Gildersleeve!"

Somebody was calling from a great way off. Distance lends enchantment even to the vulgar accents of a common street-hawker crying shrimps or watercresses. Besides, that call from afar off was in strange harmony with Cynthia's reverie. Again it sounded. The girl swayed upon her seat, drooping her heavy eyelids, and bending her tawny-hued, dishevelled, purposefully pre-Raphaelite head backwards in a kind of ecstasy. To work upon the summit or apex of a wobbly pyramid of wooden boxes is acknowledged, even by the most ardent Art students, to be a difficult thing. To think upon the same basis is an exercise fraught with ticklish possibilities; while to sleep is simply a tempting of Nemesis. Yet the young lady appeared to the anxious eyes of a solitary observer to be sleeping.

"Cynthia!"

'*Speak again—again! Sweet is thy voice, O son of Zeus! thou who wast born at daybreak in a moss-curtained cave of the Kyllenian Hill; who at noon didst wake the echoes of the slumbering crags with thy melodious shell, and at eventide didst steal away the cattle of Phoibos.*'

"She'll tumble over backwards in a minute," said Gregory Crump. "In common humanity I ought to rouse her."

There was a very uncommon amount of humanity in the look with which he regarded his *vis-à-vis*, as he put down his

bit of charcoal on the easel-tray. Then he got down very carefully from the top of his own wooden pyramid. Then he crossed the gallery and, standing on tip-toe—Gregory was a little man—inspected the features of his fair fellow-student anxiously through his glasses. Nearly all Art students availed themselves of these artificial aids to vision, even in the year 1889—indeed, the effect produced upon the nervous Academy lecturer mounting the rostrum in the theatre to deliver his inaugural address—by the combined glare of several hundred pairs of eager spectacles—must have been little short of petrifying.

Cynthia Gildersleeve had taken *her* glasses off. They lay in her lap, upon a soft deposit of black chalk-dust and little bread-pills. High lights may be picked cut with little bread-pills, and by their aid the technical process known as " stippling " is carried to more or less perfection.

" I should like to make a study of her just as she is," thought Gregory Crump.

Indeed, as the broad light of a summer noonday poured through the glass roof upon Cynthia's flame-tinted locks, her creamy-pale Rossettian features, besprinkled here and there with tiny tan-coloured freckles, making blue shadows under the long eyelashes and about the charming lips, and falling on the long slender hands—rather grimy with charcoal—that were clasped about Cynthia's knee, and the pretty crossed feet revealed by the rather scanty draperies of sage green serge—the effect was decidedly picturesque. Yet Gregory failed to carry out his threat. After gazing for one rapt half-minute—it was such a comfort to let *all* his adoration filter out of his eyes once in a way—he put out one finger, very gingerly, and touched the fair dreamer.

" Oh ! " cried Cynthia.

She started violently, oversetting her easel, which collapsed upon the stone pavement with an ear-splitting crash. The gallery echoed, the pyramid of boxes tottered—

collapsed. Had not Gregory Crump interposed the strong arm of the deliverer and plucked Miss Gildersleeve from her perilous situation, she might have been painfully involved in the general ruin.

"It was all your fault," she said half-pettishly, as soon as the echoes had stopped shouting. "Why did you make me jump so?"

"You were asleep," returned Gregory, laboriously rebuilding the pyramid of boxes.

"I wasn't," denied Miss Gildersleeve, with a little frown; "I was only dreaming."

"You can't dream without sleeping," said Gregory Crump, rather sententiously, setting her easel once more upon its legs.

"Why not?" queried Cynthia, "when you can sleep without dreaming?"

She sat down upon a folding campstool she had brought for sketching purposes and looked at Gregory.

Gregory had no answer ready. He picked up her drawing-board and replaced it on the easel. It bore a carefully stippled-in chalk drawing of the subject upon which he was himself occupied—the cast of the celebrated "Hermés" of Praxiteles, and in the glance which Gregory cast upon the work in question, a painful appreciation of its obvious demerits might have been seen to struggle with an ardent admiration for the worker.

"If," he said presently, "you weren't asleep, you were in a swoon. Been lunching on a Bath bun and a cup of coffee as usual, I suppose?"

"Wrong," asserted Cynthia, with quiet triumph. "I made a meal—a hearty one—with Clara Cowdery. We had a sixpenny—no, fivepenny plate of cold boiled beef (the extra penny was for pickled gherkins), a double portion of mashed potatoes, one household bread—when new it serves for two, as Clara says!—an open tart apiece, and a

split milk-and-soda. It was the birthday of one of us—I forget which—and so we judged the extravagance permissible. We shall return to the Bath bun and coffee *régime* to-morrow."

Gregory groaned a short groan as he rose, and dusted the chalk and breadcrumbs from the knees of his trousers.

"If you only—! You know that you might eat your way steadily from end to end of the refreshment-room bill-of-fare every day in the week—Sundays, Christmas, and Good Fridays excepted—if you would only marry me!"

"And give up my career?" exclaimed Cynthia, with a little quiver of her sensitive upper lip. "You have asked me to do this regularly every Wednesday afternoon for two years past, and I have as regularly refused you. Why do you compel me to say 'no' again?"

"I don't want you to say no," returned Gregory gruffly. "I want you to say yes. When a fellow loves a girl as I have loved you, ever since we first met——"

"Where *did* we first meet?" said Cynthia, with languid interest.

"We met," replied Gregory promptly, "four years ago, behind a large folio in the Reading Room."

"*Potts on Palæontology*, wasn't it?" suggested Miss Gildersleeve.

"No. Of course," said Gregory ruefully, "you can't be expected to remember as faithfully as I do. It was *The Natural History of Nightmares*, by Johannes Prætorius, and you were driven to appeal to me because the crabbed fifteenth-century German and the Latin terms worried you a good deal." His eyes glistened at the reminiscence. "We had plenty to say once we got started. And long after the nightmares were ridden to death we kept the folio because it was—" he stammered, "so large and—and so convenient." Cynthia blushed. "Then,

because the attendant said another lady and gentleman wanted the volume we moved to the Natural History Department."

"Where I made studies of stuffed humming-birds in oil-colour," said Cynthia.

"And I milled away at mammoth bones in monochrome," said Gregory, "to improve my knowledge of Anatomy. A sheer waste of energy, because nobody wants to buy a picture of a mammoth nowadays; and supposing anybody did, he would have to take the proportions of the animal on trust—he couldn't produce a live one to confute me with. Those were happy days!"

"My days of blindness," said Cynthia, with a tinge of tragedy in her tone.

"It was I," said Gregory proudly, "who first opened your eyes. You had been brought up in a middle-class suburban home, surrounded by cheap upholstery and chromo-lithography. You had not learned to shudder at aniline dyes, or cabbage-rose carpets and wall-paper. The sense of beauty—Beauty in the concrete as in the abstract—had not been awakened in you. I made it my task to call that sense into existence. Did I not?"

Cynthia bowed her head.

"It cost me eighteen months of labour," went on Gregory. "Pleasant labour—delightful toil! For we were engaged. Together we roved through the fields of antiquity. Slowly, gradually, you learned not to call an amphora a jug, not to look upon a kylix as a dessert-dish. A mummy became fraught with meaning, a stone arrow-head was barbed with wonderful associations—for you. Finally, classic Art—as exemplified in the works of Pheidias and Praxiteles—became a clear hierograph—not an obscure hieroglyph to you. Your soul enlarged, your mind opened—suddenly—like a young lettuce after a shower of rain," said Gregory pathetically. "And then—then, at

what was the proudest moment of my life—a blow fell which crushed me to the earth!"

"I wish you would be plainer," said Cynthia impatiently.

"I've been told it isn't possible," said Gregory sadly. "Do you know, I have sometimes thought since that day when you came to me and said: '*I know what true Beauty means now! Don't let us be engaged any more!*' that in teaching you to perceive and appreciate harmony of line and proportion and colour, I'd been cutting my own throat, like a pig when it tries to swim."

Cynthia's campstool scraped uneasily on the flagstones. She moved a little further from Gregory, and let her lifted eyes dwell upon a distant object, raptly.

"Because you did care for me—once," went on Gregory Crump, with a lump in his throat, and something in each of his honest little ugly eyes that was very like a tear; "now all is changed. The birds and beasts have migrated to South Kensington, the refreshment-room has come downstairs, and your love has faded like—like a flower in a sarcophagus."

"I was so young in those days," faltered Cynthia. "What does a young girl know about love?"

"Not much, perhaps," returned Gregory stubbornly; "but there isn't a man living who wouldn't rather apply to a young girl for information on the subject than to an old one. Look here! You've said just now I'd asked you to marry me every Wednesday for two years past. That makes a hundred and four times, isn't it, that I've proposed since you threw me over? Well, I'm going to make it a hundred and five."

"Oh, pray—" began Cynthia——

"You've got to hear me out," said Gregory firmly. "Look here! I know I'm an ugly fellow, no girl would ever care to look at twice, but I want you to look at me all your life long, and at nobody else. I'm aware I'm not

worth having; but I want *you* to have me, all the same. I don't deserve you—no living man is worthy to possess such a prize!—but I want you to give yourself to me entirely—for always. You have said you cannot love me and never could be happy if you married me—and I'd die rather than cause you a moment's misery, but I want you to marry me all the same. You see that, don't you? It's how I feel!"

Cynthia rose, and drew herself to her full height. The art serge fell in Botticellian folds about her slight, nymph-like figure, the amber beads about her neck paled in contrast with the ruddy flame-tints of her hair. She clasped her hands before her, and spoke low and earnestly.

II

"Shall I tell you how I feel?—As if I should like to speak the truth at last. A hundred and four times during the past two years you have asked me to marry you, and—upon my reiterated refusal—have begged me to say whether——"

"Whether there was any other fellow you liked better?" put in Gregory. "And you said there wasn't, a hundred and four times over."

"Ask me that question again!" said Cynthia. She was very pale, and her full tones had a note of tragedy in them.

"I will," said Gregory Crump. "*Is* there any other fellow—since last Wednesday?"

"There is—there has been since the day I broke off our rash engagement—an obstacle in human form," said Cynthia, "between us."

"Then you have deceived me!" Gregory burst out, hotly.

"I have not deceived you."

"Perhaps a girl wouldn't call it deceit," returned the disappointed lover bitterly. "Fibbing seems to come natural to 'em, like crimping their hair."

Cynthia passed her fingers through her large natural waves with a smile, and Gregory softened insensibly.

"Come," he said, in a more kindly tone, "perhaps you wouldn't mind telling me who it is? I think—I think I've a right to know. It can't be Raffael Nooks—that fellow with the brown velvet coat and knee-breeches, who wears his red hair combed into his neck, and a tie like a threepenny salad."

Cynthia smiled mournfully and shook her head.

"I don't know why it should matter," Gregory reflected, "but I can't help being glad it isn't *him*. Perhaps it's the Principal Librarian," he went on, with a flash of inspiration. "I've often heard you say his head reminded you of the bust of Plato. Or"—a light of conviction came into his eyes—"it may be—I believe it is——"

"Who?" asked Cynthia eagerly.

"The President of the R.A. He's been round the galleries twice this term, and always stopped at your easel. Last time, when he was telling you that your angles were all wrong, and your anatomy impossible, and that you'd mistaken reflected lights for high ones, I saw you gazing at him as though you absolutely worshipped him; and when he'd gone, you said he was your ideal of what Pheidias must have been at fifty."

"You have guessed wrongly in all three instances," said Cynthia, rising and lifting wide shining eyes to his. "You interrupted me just now when I was about to explain—to tell you that you have no living rival in my—my affections."

"He's dead, then," said Gregory, with a breath of relief. "Poor begg—fellow, I mean! Did it happen recently?"

"Many years ago."

"Oh, come! You've owned you fell in love with him about the time you broke off with me. He was alive then—he must have been alive."

Cynthia shook her head sadly.

"He was not."

"When did he die then?" said Gregory, in desperation.

"I do not know."

Cynthia's voice trembled as she made this staggering announcement—her eyes filled with tears.

Gregory looked at her with undisguised alarm and concern.

"I'm afraid," he said, "you've been working too long under this beastly glass roof, with the sun pouring down on your head. I've known fellows quite knocked over that way—in hot weather. Skylight-stroke, they called it. Hadn't you better let me get you a cup of tea, and then go and lie down in the Female Students' Room for half an hour?"

"I don't want any tea, thank you," said Cynthia, "and the Female Students' Room smells mouldy." The tears welled slowly up and brimmed over. "I feared you would never understand me if I did try to confide in you," she went on, with a choke in her voice; "but if you cannot comprehend, you may at least pity me, for I am very—very unhappy."

"Tell me a little more," said Gregory, "and put it as clearly as you can. Where did he come from, in the beginning?"

"He was dug up at Olympia in 1877," said the girl slowly. "Not the place at Earl's Court—the place in Greece. And then they sent him to the Louvre. He is there now."

"Her brain is certainly unhinged," thought Mr. Gregory. Then he said aloud, as gently as he could, "I suppose he was a very good-looking fellow?"

"The pure Hellenic type," said Cynthia musingly.

"Umph!" Gregory grunted. "Straight nose, curly hair, broad shoulders, I suppose?

Cynthia bowed her head in silent assent.

"Broad shoulders?"

"Yes."

"Long legs?"

"They must have been, judging by the rest of his proportions; but I can't say for certain. I have never seen him complete."

"Complete! Good heavens!" Gregory cried. "You don't mean to say that he was a cripple?"

Cynthia drew up her tall figure proudly, blushing to the roots of her hair.

"Call him what you like," she cried. "He is a million times nobler and more beautiful in his cruelly mutilated condition than he would be were he restored."

"Restored?" Gregory cried. "You talk of him as though he'd been a statue like"—he pointed to the cast of the magnificent Hermés of Praxiteles—which, mounted upon a lofty marble pedestal and backed by a white canvas screen, occupied the post of honour at the end of the Elgin Room—"like the Hermés there."

"I mean the Hermés," uttered Cynthia.

A great wave of surprise went over Gregory, taking his breath away and washing his ideas about like so many bubbles and bits of seaweed. It must have taken him completely off his feet, for when the rush and roar subsided, he found himself sitting on the warm stone pavement, looking giddily up at Miss Gildersleeve.

"Good mercy!" he gasped! "You don't mean to tell me you're in love with a statue. Not even an original—a mere plaster—" That a girl—Cynthia Gildersleeve, to wit—should conceive a passion for the counterfeit presentment of a Greek god, seemed too wildly incredible. He

doubted the evidence of his own ears. But he looked up and doubted no longer.

Forgetful of the presence of Gregory, of the espionage of official eyes, even of the casually impertinent observation of the accustomed visitor or the passing tourist armed with guide-book and opera-glass, Cynthia had remounted to the summit of her pyramid of boxes. With a bread-pill poised between her taper fingers, her head thrown back at an acute angle, and her eyes fervently upraised towards the unconscious object of her wild adoration, she sat enthralled, enrapt, unconscious of all, drifting on the Lethean waves of passion—to what ending?

The statue towards which the yearning gaze of the love-sick maiden was directed is too well-known to need painstaking description. It represents Hermés as one in the prime of early manhood, divinely beautiful and divinely strong. His right arm, which probably bore the caduceus, is missing; his left upholds a trailing mass of drapery and the figure of an infant Dionysos, which reaches upwards as though grasping with playful fingers at the magic staff. The lower limbs are from the knees downwards missing; but mutilation cannot lessen the potent beauty of the masterpiece, although it sharpens the pleasure of the gazer with a pang of regret.

What was to be done? thought poor Gregory, who, suddenly brought face to face with a dramatic situation, felt himself as powerless to cope with it as the most nervous of amateur performers. A terrible state of things! And —to Gregory's anguish was added a torture more exquisite still—the supreme conviction that *he* had helped to bring it about.

Yes, it was his fault. He had opened Cynthia's eyes to the Beautiful—had inspired her to seek, and to find her ideal of absolute perfectness in the masterpieces of classic Art. He had taught her to contemn things homely, and

things commonplace—himself amongst them, and now, when for the hundred and fifth time he offered her an honest heart of ordinary flesh and blood, she spurned it for a lump of plaster.

What was to be done?

He ran his fingers through his short stubby hair, and groaned aloud. Cynthia did not seem to hear. Nor did she appear to notice his departure, when, with drooping head and lagging steps, he moved disconsolately away.

III

A voice, a rather fat and pursy voice, singularly illustrative of its owner, addressing Gregory by name, caused him to arrest his dismal progress down the gallery, and pause by the chair of Mr. Bamford, principal guardian of the Elgin Room, who sat all day long, week by week, month by month, and year by year, doing nothing with sedulous industry at a flap-desk, which could be folded up when not in use, and concealed in the pedestal of the model of the Parthenon.

Mr. Bamford had once been butler to a bishop, and was very much like a bishop himself; even without the episcopal shovel-hat, apron and gaiters. He was conscious of this distinctive peculiarity, and fostered it. There was even something stately and reverend about his manner of taking snuff, which is a luxury much in vogue amongst attendants and curators employed in the keeping of public buildings—men who are divorced from daybreak to nightfall, from the coy kisses of the nut-brown briar-root.

"Ah, dear!" said Mr. Bamford, wheezing a little—the bishop on whom he had formed his manner had been a sufferer from asthma. "Ah, dear! I see you looking at her. A sad change, Mr. Crump."

Gregory glared at him speechlessly.

"All flesh is grass," went on Mr. Bamford. "To-day you're blooming in your beauty like the cauliflower of the field; to-morrow you're cut down and cast into the biling fiery furnace along with corned beef and carrots. For more years than I should care to reckon up, Mr. Crump, I have took a' interest in Miss Cynthia Gildersleeve, and I must say, it goes to my 'art to see her so changed for the worst."

"She *is* changed," assented Gregory miserably.

"I close my heyes," said Mr. Bamford, shutting them up comfortably as he spoke; "and I see her as she were when first she came here, and there she is!—all a-blowing and a-growing with a red in her cheeks, and a spring in her walk, and a plumpness about her," said Mr. Bamford juicily, "as was, to a responsible man like myself, as had seen a many young female candidates prepared for Confirmation—generally suggestful of agreeable ideas." He took a pinch of snuff out of his box, and heaved a sigh. "Where's her colour now? Gone!"—he flicked a few grains of snuff from one of the protuberant ledges of his capacious waistcoat. "And her flesh? Gone, too, and you can't deny it. She drags one foot behind another when she walks; when she sits, she sags to one side like one of them new student's clay models of the Little 'Ercules, that 'asn't got enough cold iron in its inside to keep it perpendick'lar. In a word, she's changed. And if you owned the powers of observation, for which my lud the bishop always considered me remarkable, you wouldn't be astonished at it."

"No?" the monosyllable was all Gregory could trust himself to utter.

"No," repeated Mr. Bamford firmly. "Because the cause would be known to you."

"And that cause?" stuttered Gregory.

"Bath buns!" said Mr. Bamford, settling his triple chin into his episcopal collar.

"Ugh!" Gregory shuddered.

"I will not deny," said Mr. Bamford, getting out of his armchair, after a slight struggle, and laying a patronising hand on the young man's shoulder; "I will not deny but what the Bath bun is a satisfying article, and therefore cheap at a penny. (I tried one myself one day, and, to judge by my sensations subsequently, I might have made a meal off marbles.) Nor that coffee—hot, and served o' lay——"

"I beg your pardon?" interrogated Gregory.

"O' lay," repeated Mr. Bamford, "is not a nourishing form of thirst-quencher. But coffee in perpetuity I do not 'old with, nor yet toast-and-water carried in a tin flask. As to sandwiches, put up in a newspaper package and carried in the pocket dooring a crowded 'bus journey from Highgate or Hampstead to the Tottenham Court Road—sandwiches which are composed of cold mutton without even a mixed pickle to lend 'em animation—my opinion on the subject is too strong to be expressed. I have seed the constitution of many a young lady student undermined by 'em, and if I had a seat in the 'Ouse to-morrow," said Mr. Bamford, puffing, "they should be put down by Act of Parliament."

Gregory warmly shook hands with Mr. Bamford, whose views upon this subject exactly coincided with his own.

"The long and the short of it is, that young ladies can't take care of 'emselves," continued Mr. Bamford. "They should give up trying as early as possible, and let young gentlemen do it for 'em. You and Miss Gildersleeve have drawed the same Academy subjects from different points of view for nearly three years past. You have drawed apart, and you have drawed close. I will not disguise from you that me and my subordinates have looked to see you draw closer still. My lud the bishop used to say to me often and often, 'You have an eye, Bamford.' And I don't deny but I have. That eye has seed in you and in Miss Gildersleeve the signs of mutual attachment. Say the word,

Mr. Crump, and let's have a wedding from the British Museum. The place is a bit too dry-as-dusty. It would be improved by something of the sort—it raly would."

"I should be only too glad to oblige you," said poor Gregory, "but—but the truth of the matter is that somebody has been before me!"

"Mightn't it be possible," hinted Mr. Bamford, "to overthrow him?"

"It might," returned Gregory, "but I am afraid it would come expensive."

"I didn't mean that you were to smash him," said Mr. Bamford.

"Nothing less than smashing would do—under the circumstances."

"Dear, dear!" ejaculated Mr. Bamford; "I should never 'a dreamed you were that bloodthirsty. But supposing a certain person put it in your power to get rid of him without any breach of the peace—pulverise him and shatter his 'opes merely by wishing,"—old Bamford chuckled oleaginously—"what would you say, sir, what would you say?"

"I should say," said Gregory, "that I should very much like to see the person."

"And supposing I replied, 'You see him now, sir, and his name is Bamford,'" hinted that official, "how would you express your surprise and gratitood, sir, eh?"

"My surprise and gratitude," responded Gregory, "would take the form of a pound of the choicest and most expensive snuff that could be purchased for money."

"You're aware of my weakness, Mr. Crump," said Bamford. "All of us here have contracted a harmless 'abit of some kind or another which helps to pass the time. One takes pills—which I find too trying to the constitution; another chews stick-licorice; another amuses himself with making little statistical calculations relative to the number

of squint-eyes and wooden-legs to be averaged amongst the visitors to the Galleries from day to day and year's end to year's end. The majority of us take our recreation in the form of snuff; and I will not deceive you as to my being particular about the quality of mine."

He chuckled again as he let down the flap in the model of the Parthenon, and unlocking a drawer in the desk it concealed, withdrew from it some object small enough to be concealed between his thumb and forefinger. Then, motioning to Gregory to hold out his hand, he triumpantly placed in the extended palm—

"A bean!" cried Gregory.

"So I thought when first I see it," agreed Mr. Bamford. "Look again."

Gregory looked again. It was not a bean, the test of touch affirmed, but a bean-shaped pebble, dull brown in colour, and curiously mottled.

"I got that there stone-bean," said Mr. Bamford, "years and years afore your time, from one of our old stoodents. The Academy standard of age were not limited, twenty years ago, when first I took office. Lord, *lud!* the stoodents I've seen come in young and hopeful, only to wither away, in the hot air of them floor-gratings, like so many over-forced scarlet-runners! But Mr. Bowler—Bowler were his name—were old when I come here. He used to tell me with a sort of mollancolly pride how many times he'd tried for admittance to the Academy schools and failed, but he never lost courage, and would go on patiently libelling them figgers—the Discobolus, and the Venus of Milo in chalk and sepia and what-not, until I've fancied I seed an expression of disgust upon their faces at being drawed so often and so badly by one man. Well, sir, he'd sent in his work—the shaded figger, and the hanatomical figger, the single 'and and the foot, and so on for the nineteenth or twentieth time, and we Departmenta

Officials was a 'aving our little joke—according to custom—about old Mr. Bowler bein' bowled out again, when, to our astonishment, out come the list with his name at the very top!"

"Poor old fellow!" said Gregory.

"You may well call him poor," said Mr. Bamford, "when he fell ill from overjoy—for he took to his bed within eight hours of getting the good news. I went to see him, for I'd always behaved as respectful to him as I would to my own grandfather—and found him in a four-pair-back in Red Lion Passage, lying on three sacks, with a roll of old chalk-and-charcoal studies under his head for a bolster. 'I've got my start in life, Bamford,' he says, 'my career begins from this day'—and indeed he was careering off to the other world as fast as a pewmonia could carry 'im. 'You're his friend,' says the medical gentleman, as they'd called in, whisperin' to me. 'Break it to him gently that he won't see the night out,' and I did, adding a word or two of exhortation with regard to his spiritual state, as I felt to be the duty of one as for years had occupied the situation of confidential butler and valet to my lord the Bishop. 'My spiritual state?' says he. 'I suppose it's precious bad, seein' as I've spent the years of my life worshippin' at the shrines,' he says, 'of Pagan divinities. You shall hear my confession, Bamford, and receive the only legacy I've got to leave—and that ain't honestly mine, truth to tell.' And as well as he could for weakness, he takes this stone-bean from one of the fingers of a dirty old glove he'd got tied round his neck. 'I'll tell you how I come by it,' he says, between his gasps. 'Three days afore the list of Academy admissions come out I were up in Egyptian Room Number One with the Head of the Department.' 'Mr. Bowler,' he said to me, having known me for many years, 'would it interest you to see some antiquities unpacked? A case has just arrived,' says he,

'containin' a valuable set,' he says, 'of funeral urns,' he says, 'from the tombs of the Kings at Thebes,' and I accepted the invitation, which, comin' from such a source, was to be considered a compliment. Well, the cases was opened, and the Head of the Department gave me one of the jars to hold while he unlocked the wall case it was to be put in. The lid of the jar had been sealed down, but the clay had crumbled away from the rim of the lid, and I lifted it off and peeped in. There was nothing but a smell of spices at first, but when I shook the jar somethink rattled inside, and I put in my hand, and took out this. I took it,' he says, 'and hid it in my pocket, seein' that it was an amulet of some kind. If there was wishing-luck in such things for ancient Egyptians, I thinks, perhaps there 'll be luck for me. And next time I was alone I took it out, Mr. Bamford, and wished to see my name top of the list of this year's Academy admissions. And when the list came out, there it was ! and it's come in upon me that nothing short of a miracle could have put it there. This wishing-stone, Bamford,' he says, 'is of the sort that only grants one wish to its possessor. I know that, because I've wished to live, and it's no good. I've always looked upon you as a son, Bamford,' he says, 'take my legacy—and much good may it do you !' And he went off as quiet as a lamb. That was eleven years ago, and the bean has laid in my desk ever since."

"And you never had the curiosity to try whether it really was a wishing-stone ? " said Gregory curiously.

"As to wishing," said Mr. Bamford, comfortably re-wedging himself into his armchair, "what have I got to wish for ? I 'old as responsible a position as befits a retired domestic of my lord the Bishop. I have a comfortable little salary, and a comfortable little home. Hampstead is rather a distance to travel in wet weather, but once you're there, there's no more desirable situation for resi-

dence in the whole of the habitable globe. And if I was to wish the Heath shifted nearer to the Museum, or the Museum brought nearer to the Heath," ended Mr. Bamford, "Mrs. Bamford might find it inconveniently convenient in the way of dropping down on me whenever she felt disposed. Stop a bit, though," he wiped his shining bald head with a red and yellow silk handkerchief, and smiled broadly at the quaintness of his own idea. "If a wish is granted to every successive owner of this," he took the stone kidney-bean from Gregory's hand, "I'll wish that you, Mr. Crump, had got that pound packet of superfine snuff in your pocket this identical minute, that you alluded to at the beginning of our conversation."

And Mr. Bamford laughed heartily. But a curious sensation came over Gregory. He grew very hot, and then very cold, whilst from the nape of his neck a sharp tingling thrill shot down his spine and made its exit *viâ* the soles of his boots, apparently vanishing into the pavement underneath them.

Was it fancy? Had his right-hand coat pocket grown suddenly, strangely heavy! Yes! No! *Yes!* He could see it bulging as it had never to his recollection bulged before. His heart beat a tattoo against his shirt-front. He broke out into a damp perspiration as he realised that the deceased Bowler's belief in the occult powers of the Egyptian kidney-bean was justified. That it was a wishing-stone after all!

"Ha, ha, ha!" The laugh with which Gregory echoed Mr. Bamford's was false and unreal—the very pinchbeck of genuine mirth. It was necessary to begin—and he feigned. With simulated knowingness, he drew from his pocket the package that had so mysteriously come there. It was a neatly-made-up compact package, wrapped in white paper, and sealed with green wax, and as the grateful fragrance it exhaled stole to the nostrils of Mr. Bamford, the eyes of that functionary rolled rapturously in their

sockets, and his large countenance became wreathed with smiles.

"You—don't mean to say as you'd got it in your pocket all the time?" he exclaimed admiringly, as Gregory, with a fine affectation of carelessness, placed the treasure within his eager grasp. "And you drawed me on a purpose. Dear, dear! I never was more surprised, Mr. Crump, sir, never in my life!"

Gregory never had been, either. But he concealed the fact.

"Is it the right sort?" he asked, with a wretched assumption of knowingness, as Mr. Bamford slowly opened the parcel.

"Prince's Rappee!" exclaimed the overwhelmed official. "Must have cost a guinea the pound. Mr. Crump, sir, this is generous indeed!"

"Don't mention it," said the hypocritical Gregory.

"If there was any return I could make—" began Mr. Bamford.

Gregory seized his chance.

"You're under no obligation at all," he said, and the truth of the assertion struck him forcibly as he uttered it. "But if you'd care to let me have the stone—as a little remembrance, you know, eh?"

"It's yours, sir!" said Mr. Bamford.

He thrust it into Gregory's eager hand, and took a tremendous pinch of the Prince's Rappee.

"And much good may it do you!" His eyes became watery, his countenance suffused, his jaw dropped.

As Gregory hurried away, he sneezed, and the triple explosion seemed to sake the solid foundations of the building.

"HRASH! most generous, Mr. Crump, sir; most open-'anded indeed. HRASH!"

But Gregory was out of hearing.

With his prize clutched in one feverish palm he hurried out of the Elgin Room and into a small, remote and lonely chamber devoted to the reception of students' easels, boxes, and drawing-boards. Here, with unspeakable relief, he found himself alone.

"Only to think," he reflected, staring intently at the bean that had so strangely proved its wonderful properties a moment since: "Only to think that I have it in my power to become President of the Royal Academy or Director of the Bank of England—or Cynthia's husband—in the twinkling of an eye, merely by uttering a wish. But I'm not going to use this power selfishly. The Presidentship or the Directorate would be of no use to me without Cynthia, and Cynthia—what good would marriage with her bring me without love? All I want is a fair field and no favour—an equal chance with other men. I can hold my own against *them*, though I can't compete with a Greek statue. It's absurd to suppose it. And so," said Gregory, drawing a deep breath—"with all my heart I wish that Cynthia may be cured—in the quickest and completest way—of this miserable craze!"

The moment he had uttered the words a change came over him. His strained nerves relaxed, his eyelids became heavy—an unconquerable drowsiness overpowered his senses. He sat down in a corner on an upturned packing-case, and leaning his head in a cobwebby angle of the wall, fell soundly asleep.

IV

Cynthia sat dreaming, her eyes fixed upon the sunset-bathed beauties of her idol, her unused crayons lying idly in her lap, her bread-pill drying between her right-hand thumb and forefinger.

Without altering the direction of her gaze, she became aware that a shadow was travelling towards her down the

long perspective of hot white pavement. She turned her head as the shadow merged in her own, and with difficulty restrained a cry of surprise.

To rouse the emotion of astonishment in the breast of a student, or other *habitué* of the British Museum, is not an easy thing. Every form of human eccentricity, strangeness or *bizarrerie*, finds its way within the portals of that vast and echoing place. Sitting at her easel, week by week, month by month, year by year, Cynthia had seen representatives of most of the nations of the earth pass by; dusky Zulu chiefs wrapped in their leopard-skin *karosses*, high-capped Persians, oblique-eyed, silk-robed, jade-buttoned Chinese mandarins, lithe and dusky Lascars, bearded Turks, red-headed wide-cheeked Tartars, in fur-bordered caftans, shock-haired Slavs, bloused French workmen, Irish peasants even, blue-cloaked and frieze-coated. She was satiated with ethnological exhibitions. Strangely deformed or weirdly attired shapes now and then flashed into the field of her consciousness, created a brief sensation, and retired : as in the case of an old lady who sometimes fluttered down the galleries, attired in an antiquated brocade sacque which probably belonged to a belle of the hoop-and-powder period, a superannuated hat, decorated with a whole garden full of obsolete flowers, and stepping mincingly upon shoeless feet covered with ragged silk stockings which once were white; or the little Polish Jew with three humps; or the odd individual of uncertain age and undistinguishable nationality who sported the broad-leaved hat, the long-skirted wide-cuffed brown coat, the flapped waistcoat, buckled knee-breeches, and lambswool stockings of Quakerdom in the era of William Penn.

But the person who approached did not bear the hall-mark of eccentricity. There was nothing affected in his bearing, or grotesque in his attire. On the contrary, he was more harmoniously in keeping with his surroundings than

Cynthia herself. What, then, made the girl start so violently, wipe and assume her glasses with such eager haste, and, forgetting her usual demure and modest aloofness of bearing and regard, stare upon the stranger with such incredulous and wide-eyed wonder?

What, indeed, but that the heroic draped statue of a bearded Dionysos seemed to have descended from its pedestal for the purpose of taking a noonday walk through the galleries?

Borne upon sandalled feet, this majestic figure noiselessly approached the breathless girl. Another moment, and it stood before Cynthia, its composed and handsome features bent upon her with a look of grave benevolence, its calm grey eyes looking wisely, seriously straight into her own.

"I—I beg your pardon!" stammered Miss Gildersleeve. "Did you want——? Were you about to——?"

The lips of the stranger moved, and from them issued melodious sounds, measured utterances which were incomprehensible to the fluttered listener.

"I—I'm afraid I don't understand," Cynthia said, blushing vividly; "it's all Greek to me—what you're talking about."

"It should be Greek to you, O lady," said the stranger, in admirably pure and mellow English, "for Greek it was. Yet I will speak the language that is your mother-tongue, by virtue of the talisman that summoned me from my shadowy dwelling-place and brought me hither. A strange, sad place is this"—he glanced round, and underneath his auburn beard, thickly sown with silver hairs, his beautiful lips assumed a melancholy expression. "These broken statues, these dissevered limbs, like votive offerings hung about the walls of the temple of Asclepios; these broken capitals and ruined tombs, gathered together by unknown hands in this vast building, are strange to see. It is as if

the sculptor's art had died and mouldered, and left behind nothing but dust and a few bones, with a sleeping Silenus" —he waved his hand in the direction of Mr. Bamford, who, lulled by the drowsy heat and the soothing silence, snored stertorously in his armchair—" and a waking Muse to guard them."

" Did you mean me ? " said Cynthia, bewilderedly raising her eyes to the stranger's.

" Who else ? " he said, stroking his golden-grey beard and smiling on her. " Do not fear me, dear maiden," he continued, as she dropped her eyes in confusion. " Although your garments are of a fashion strange and unlovely to his unaccustomed eyes, the form they drape is worthy of the chisel of Praxiteles."

A great wave of wonder passed over Cynthia and left her gasping.

" Fear me not," said the Greek-robed stranger, smiling upon her kindly. " The student should not tremble before the master, but look up to him with love. Yet if the immortal Shade of Pheidias had appeared to me as I to thee, when I was as yet unknown, before the popular will acclaimed me and Athens crowned me, I too had paled and quivered as you do now."

" Are you," said Cynthia in broken, hesitating accents, that sounded strange in her own ears, " are you—Praxiteles ? But no, no ! " she cried, " it is impossible ! His works live to-day, but *he*—he is dead—he died more than two thousand years ago."

" If his works live," said the stranger, " how can you say ' he is dead ? ' Rise, and let me judge your draughtsmanship."

As Cynthia, in involuntary obedience to a gesture which bespoke the master, rose from her seat, the classically-robed stranger—whom we must call Praxiteles—took her place and looked critically at the work upon the easel. A

quiver came about his bearded lips, like the ripple that a hidden eddy makes in gold-grey water, and as he raised his eyes to the Hermés (now for the first time brought within his range of vision) he broke into a downright peal of laughter.

"By Zeus! Time hath not spared thee, work of mine hands, any more than a hungry rat a cheese. So looked Pentheus the Theban after the furious Maenads had worked their will upon him. Legless, armless, noseless—for that lump of putty clapped on the face by some well-meaning restorer, I will not own!—who would ever guess this cracked and broken thing was ever a triumph of the art of Praxiteles? Stay, though, it is but a cast manipulated and tinted to look like mellowed Parian. Are there no sculptors in this land to-day, that its people bow down before the dismembered fragments of the masterpieces I and my brethren wrought of old time?"

He fingered his beard and went on musingly—

"What has become of my noble Faun?—where is my sleeping Cupid, that fair, cunning Phryne stole from me with subtle art, and where my image of the lovely spoiler? These were triumphs of skill, worthy to carry on my fame—to send my name ringing down the grooves of Time for ever. Alas! they are lost, doubtless, like the chryselephantine figures of Pheidias, and the art of Praxiteles is exemplified to posterity by the statue of a pilfering slave."

"A slave?" Cynthia echoed.

"He came into my service at the beginning of the Olympiad of Coroelus. A finely shaped, light-fingered knave," said Praxiteles. "He was one of the attendants at the baths of Polycratus near the Temple of Apollo at Athens. There I saw him wielding his strigils and sponges, and bought the rogue for the sake of his magnificent muscles—which, by the way, he had developed in the galleys. A Cyprian

by birth, a thief by trade. Were you not, Antiphoros?" and again he laughed.

"Go on," said Cynthia hoarsely. Her castle of dreams was crumbling about her; the flower of strange passion that had rooted itself in her heart was being plucked up—wrenched from its living bed by a relentless hand. "Tell me more about Antiphoros—if that was his name?"

"There is not much to tell. He lied to me and I laughed, and disbelieved him; he robbed me, and I laughed—and bore with it. The dog was such a model—as perfect without as he was distorted within. For his very beauty he deserved immortality, and as you see"—he pointed to the Hermés—"I have given it him. As Hermés, ruler of rogues—patron of pickpockets—my light-heeled, light-fingered Cyprian stands before you—that is, as much as relentless Time has left of him to-day."

"And what—became of him?" whispered Cynthia.

"In return for his services as a model," returned Praxiteles, "I caused him to be freed. He rewarded me as might have been contemplated, by running away with a jewelled diadem belonging to my fair friend Phryne, and a golden armlet given me by the citizens of Cos. For this fault he was arrested and sent to the House of Correction, under the patronage of his tutelar deity—there was, if I remember, a very fine statue of Mercury just above the door. There I had the pleasure of seeing him wearing a wooden collar, like other criminals."

Cynthia shuddered, and gasped.

"And finally," said Praxiteles, "he was slain in a brawl—for stealing a mess of garlic belonging to the fellow-prisoner to whom he was fettered. So there you have the whole history of Antiphoros. Dear damsel," his voice grew ineffably musical and sad, "learn to set but little store by earthly beauty. A lovely soul in a lovely body—surely than this, nothing can be more excellent. Thus, the

Father of the Immortals meant man to be, when first He fashioned with His divine hands the human shape. An image first He made of red clay, and tempered it with pure water from the crystal Alpheus and wine from the golden vessel borne by beautiful Ganymede, and it was godlike to look upon as a thing made by a god's hands. But it was not kneaded sufficiently, and warped and shrank in the drying, so that its loveliness was marred. Then the mighty Maker fashioned another shape, like a cunning workman, and this was tempered well, and warped not. And He bent down to breathe between its lips the living soul that should cause the heart to beat, and the red blood to course in the blue veins, and waken the eyes to tears, and stir the lips to laughter. But as He stooped, Hephaeistos, jealous of the divine gift about to be conferred upon the mortal race, sent up from his subterranean forges smoke and vapour, which obscured the vision of the immortal workman. So that the imperfect image received that which was meant for the perfect one. And Zeus, seeing this, was angered, and said, 'See what thou hast done! Behold a beautiful soul has been placed in a body unbeautiful through thine act, and, god though I be, I cannot take back the gift that I have given!' Then into the other form He breathed a soul, but, being wearied with his labours, and angered by the craft of Hephaeistos, it was less pure, lovely, and spotless than the other. And so Man came to be.

"There are those who walk the earth to-day with gracious mien and fair eyes, with cheeks rosy as the apples of love, sons and daughters of the Immortals in all seeming. And it may be by happy chance the soul of such a one is fair as the body that holds it, but more often—alas! that the irony of destiny should have it so—it is leprous and spotted—venal and vile. And to those that love this man, or this woman, sorrow shall be brought, and sharp regret.

"And there be others whose bodies boast no garb of beauty, whose tongues are not eloquent, whose cheeks lack crimson, and whose locks own no gleam of gold. Swart and ill-fashioned the earthly house may be, but from its narrow windows a heavenly spirit shines, and the inner chamber is a treasure-house full of precious things. If such a man love thee, maiden, happy art thou for thy life long, and after! For Beauty is a flower that fades, but Truth and Faith are imperishable as the asphodel that bloom in the Heavenly Fields, and crown with fadeless garlands the calm foreheads of those who, their earthly toils being over, their earthly pilgrimage complete, walk for ever hand in hand with the Immortals, eternally happy, for ever young!"

The grand organ-tones ceased. Long after their mellow cadences lived but in memory, Cynthia remained with closed eyelids and hands folded upon her strangely quieted heart. Suddenly consciousness flashed back upon her—she drew a long breath and lifted her head. The classic figure of her dream—or her vision—had vanished. She was sitting on her pile of boxes below the upraised figure of the Hermés, which had ceased—how strangely—to be anything to her but a beautiful thing, an exquisite object of Art. And Gregory Crump was coming eagerly towards her. . . . It seemed to Cynthia as she met the love-light in those honest, faithful eyes, as though her own had been opened. Her heart went out with a strange new yearning to the lover who had loved her so faithfully and so long. She put her hand in his without a word, but he understood, and that was enough.

They strolled down the long galleries together, and came into the great vestibule. They pushed open the glass-doors and went out into the fresh air. It had been raining, and the sunset glorified the puddles as Cynthia's love was from henceforth to glorify the life of Gregory Crump.

And here Gregory pulled the wonderful bean from his pocket and told her its story. But Cynthia absolutely refused to believe that the episode of the pound of snuff was anything but a playful invention of Gregory's. She laughed, and took the talisman when he gave it her, and pressed her to wish.

"Mind, I only do it for fun. I don't believe the story. But to please you I will wish." She thought a second and then said, blushing vividly, "I wish that we may live together and work together, and—and love each other as a true husband and wife should—all the rest of our lives. Ah!"

For Gregory, defiant of appearances, and regardless of the eye of the Inspector of Police, had caught and ardently kissed her. And the bean had slipped from between her fingers and rolled away.

"Where? I can't see it. I believe that sparrow has swallowed it," said Cynthia. She pointed to a dingy specimen of *Passer domesticus*, which, with widely-gaping bill and distended crop, hopped and fluttered on the gravel a few paces distant from them. "Poor little thing! I believe it is choking—it seems to be swelling so queerly, and its feathers one could almost say were changing colour! Why, how strange! it is not a sparrow but a pigeon. How could I have mistaken a sparrow for a pigeon?" said Cynthia bewilderedly, as the bird flew away.

"Perhaps it was a sparrow who wished to be turned into a pigeon," thought Gregory Crump.

BROTHER NIGHTINGALE

Gui de Bernart, Count of Quercy and Poucé, was Church property by rights, but before the tonsure had spoiled his curls, or the barred gates of the cloister clashed to behind him, Death called his stern father and Uc, his elder brother, and Gui was summoned back to the world, the tail of the long line of novices to be the head of a great family.

Auvergne was very beautiful this May, green as emerald, blue as turquoise, with a dance of pink and white blossoms between earth and heaven. You would scarce have dreamed that in a world so fair War raged, and three European kings tugged for possession of an empire. Henry of England, eighth of the name, bluff, fair and ruddy, and over six feet high in his padded shoes of chicken-skin; Charles of Austria, a pasty lad, with hungry eyes and a long chin; and, lastly, Francis of France.

Gui knew of Francis. A noble figure of a man topped by a long face, small-eyed, with a fleshy mouth and a veritable proboscis of a nose. Brave to folly, chivalrous to excess, like his great brother of England, a greedy gobbler of love, adored by his mother, worshipped by other men's wives, idolised by his sister.

That sister was a figure set high upon a pedestal in Gui's gallery. Pale, bright-eyed Madame Marguerite, who spent her time in praying for the fortunes of Francis when she was not jolting in her horse-litter from province to province upon his business, or holding Courts of Love,

or writing *novelles* about the tender passion, held the boy's fancy. Though she wrote Lutheran hymns with Marot, the variable creature—they sang her Latin ones in choir at the Convent of the Cordeliers—she had not yet incurred the bitterness of the Sorbonne, and Gui had received, not so long ago, six stripes with a thong of neat's leather from the Master of the Novices for smuggling the first part of the *Heptameron* in to practice, hidden between covers profanely reft from a volume of Plain Chant.

She journeyed, this fair Queen of Navarre, continually from place to place, indefatigable upon the business of that big brother of hers; and as the powerful Flemish horses jogged before and behind her great curtained litter, and Madame de Brantôme held the ink-horn, the amorous adventures of her heroines and heroes grew upon the page.

"An accursed record of vanity and worse," the Master of the Novices called the book, "setting forth the frivolous doings of male magpies and female popinjays."

"Nay, my Father," Gui pleaded. "Surely they are beautiful ladies and brave gentlemen of good family, and the Dame Oisille is both elderly and pious."

"The more shame for her that hearkened with delight to the recital of ungodliness," bellowed the Novice Master, "And, fie," he cried, "upon the beauty of her she-companions! What, forsooth, is Beauty, unless it be the modesty, retiredness, magnanimity, meekness, that adorned the blessed St. Catherine in angels' eyes?"

"Why, no, my Father," says Gui, in his smooth young voice, dulcet as honey in the middle register, rounder and fuller than most boyish pipes in the lower notes, piercing high and sweetly shrill in the upper stave, "I should rather take it, by your venerable leave, that the ladies Madame Marguerite doth write of were beautiful in the common rareness of the earthly way, with bright

eyes, rosy lips, oval cheeks, tinted with right carnation, rounded chins, swan-like bosoms "—the Novice Master frowned—" slender waists——"

The strap of neat's leather had come thwacking across the unfinished dissertation. Gui had not lost the sting of it, even as his grey palfrey shied and bolted, frightened by the bellow of a shaggy red bull in a pasture beyond the hedge.

" By the faith of my body! which is an oath that may be used without profanity," said the young Count, sticking manfully to the peaked and gilded saddle, " I am well done with Father Theobaldus and his thongings. Ladies may please or not please angels. So long as they are fair and merry they shall be pleasing to me."

His three mounted servitors, jogging behind, saw his shoulders set square and his elbows well down against his ribs, and found their new lord much less of a milksop than Carnét, the steward, had told them he would be. Gui owed his excellent seat to the fact that the Punishment Horse at the Convent was a stout tree-trunk mounted on four posts. A great deal of the young gentleman's leisure time had been spent upon this rude courser, expiating faults of secularity.

There, as he sat with dangling legs, he would dream that the rough wood between his knees changed to the body of a gallant horse, and that the rider in velvet *pourpoint* trimmed with miniver, a plumed cap upon his golden curls, and gold spurs at his heels, and gold jingling in the purse that hung by the dagger at his girdle, was riding to the rescue of a lovely lady travelling in a horse-litter through wild country, and beset by knaves or thieves near some forest-side or swamp thicket. Gui always performed prodigies of valour; she always rewarded him, at the last gasp, and miserably hacked with wounds, by the offer of her hand.

Now, I promise you, his heart beat when, some quarter mile ahead, he spied a cavalcade with such a curtained litter in the middle of it, seeming to belong to a person of consequence. For half a company of men-at-arms rode guarding it, and the curtains were rich with embroidery of armorial bearings; and a white small hand, covered with jewels, beckoned through them to the knight in command of the horsemen. Here was no opportunity for gallantry for Gui, no chance of seeing through those curtains. But where eyes may not pierce a voice can. And they had not dubbed him Brother Nightingale at the Cordeliers for nothing. Piqued, he began to sing a song of the Vaudois Mountains—

"Like travellers' joy in blossom,
Like snow upon the pass,
She drifted o'er the mountain,
Nor ever touched the grass.

'Twas I who saw the fairy;
She stood and spread around
Her misty robes in vapour——"

In vain Brother Nightingale sang, it seemed. The men-at-arms checked their horses' trampling to hear better; the knight rode, nodding his steel-cased head and wagging a mailed finger to the tune. The curtains of the litter never parted. He began to think she must be old and deaf. And yet the hand that had beckoned between the curtains had been fair and beautiful—a young woman's much-kissed hand.

"By the Cope!" said Gui, or Brother Nightingale, "she would have looked out had a clerk paced his mule to one of Marot's psalms or a pig-driving churl roared a tavern catch; but a young gentleman riding home to a great inheritance offers her his best, and she'll have none of it."

He tried her again with a song of Madame Marguerite's—

This was the right bait. The near curtain rang back upon the gilded rods. The passenger looked out, and Brother Nightingale's voice dropped to the bottom of his throat as if the bird had been shot dead.

She wore a black velvet *coif* on her thick blonde hair, a *coif* with rolled-up edges, and a great jewel in the velvet over the middle of the brow. Her face was of a living, vivid freshness, its lips narrow crimson lines against the rosy-white; her great sweet eyes were darkly blue under wide, brown, arching eyebrows. Her nose was longish, with a ripple in it; her chin delicately round. Her travelling mantle was *cramoisie*, dagged at the edges. An older lady shared the litter, and she was wrapped in scarlet and vair, and held a little dog asleep upon her knees.

"Messire Saffredune." The young lady spoke to the knight-at-arms, who rode up eagerly and stooped to listen. "I would have that young gentleman, who sings no worse than he rides, come here and tell me where he learned that song?"

"Lady," returned the youth thus complimented, before the gentleman in plate-mail could speak, "since you do me the honour to ask, I learned the song at the Convent of the Cordeliers at Clermont."

There was a laugh from the litter. "The good fathers spend not all their time, then, in the chanting of Latin canticles?"

"Madame," said Gui, "the Master of the Novices found ample employment for his leisure in making us sing upon the wrong side of our mouths. But his thong of neat's leather is now hung up for ever, so far as your poor servitor is concerned. Wherefore I am as free, not only to sing Queen Marguerite's songs, but to read her books, as any other honest young worldly gentleman."

"You are of the singing South, too," said the lady

apprised of it by his speech. "That is the country of troubadours. And I cannot understand how any should ever have dreamed that you were meant to be a monk. Come, ride beside me a little, and tell me of your parentage and purposes, aims and desires. You are young, and that is a wonderful thing to begin with. You were to wear a brown robe and live in a stone cell. And now you caper like a lusty May cloud frisking before the breeze in these sunny blue fields above us, and every hawthorn and sloe, and every apple and cherry-tree sits like a virgin robed in white, waiting for the bridegroom. And the almond-blossoms wave pink, roguish hands over the walls and hedges, and the brooks go laughing by like hoydens, who cry, 'Come, follow!' Is it not so?"

Gui reddened to his ardent eyes.

"I follow," he said, "but not a brook. I answer the waving of a hand, but a white and not a pink one. Maidens may sit in bride-gowns and wait for other bridegrooms. I know not whether the lady I would serve is wedded or maid, but of one thing I am very sure." He caught his breath. "There is no other lady on this earth for Gui de Bernart, Count of Quercy and Poucé to follow."

"I think you may have been eight hours free of your convent," said the lady, arching droll brows over her dazzling eyes, "and have already sprouted into a courtier. And those who follow me, young gentleman," and a subtle smile parted the narrow scarlet lips back from her square white teeth, "will have to follow far. I am for Toulouse, on my way to Madrid, where my brother lies a captive in the fetters of Charles of Austria."

"He fought at Pavia for King Francis?" cried Gui.

"And was taken prisoner with the King," said the lady, with reddening eyelids. "What, did you not know that the French army was routed, that all the great soldiers of France have been killed or made captive, and that

Francis lies sick and in chains. Ah! Holy St. Louis!" she cried, "that I were a man, and had worn d'Alençon's shoes. There would have been no flying when sword-play began, no paling before the mangonel and the arbalest. Ah, Lord! that Margaret of Navarre had been a man!"

It was out. Gui knew in one marvellous moment all his dreams fulfilled. He plucked off his cap and cried, "Oh, madame," and found the white jewelled hand lent to him to kiss, and stammered out a prayer to her to let him be her servant.

"I do not know what to say to you, my Lord of Poucé. I am the poor sister of a brother in misfortune. Before you lie honourable estate, wealth and snug comfort by your fireside with a young wife; before me a wild journey, a desperate hope, much bodily discomfort, many wounds to pride, perhaps loss of all I hold most dear."

"Faith of my body, madame!" cried Gui. "For a man of my age"—he was seventeen—"to come into an inheritance, dismount at gate, sit down in the seat of his forefathers and beckon to a young wife to perch upon his knee is well, but not quite well enough. Were I forty-five it might be well enough. But I have a taste for life, madame, and for adventure, and for *belle emprise*, and in the palm of that loveliest hand you offer me all three. I have a fat pouch of gold ducats to defray my charges; I have three stout knaves to do me service due. I have the sword by my side, the heart in my body, and the voice in my throat. And all these are yours, madame, to do with as you will!"

The cavalcade pushed on, the lusty grey palfrey close beside the litter. Brother Nightingale began to sing again more loudly, more sweetly than ever. He was now within a few leagues of his own territory, and the walled town of Poucé was garlanded to greet him. A cold collation was spread in the City Hall, the Justice Royal, the *noblesse*

and the gentry were waiting for the fanfare of the trumpets to clear their throats for welcoming speeches, the fief lords and tenants were ready with rents and homage due. A triumphal arch, whose painted masonry concealed two asses, was ambling to the appointed place, a chorus of cherubic vocalists, enclosed in a machine of basket-work, were ready to be let down by ropes from the church tower.

"There are the gates of Poucé, my lad," said Queen Marguerite, as the cavalcade passed within a mile.

"I do not see them, madame," said Gui stoutly.

"Ah! it is exceedingly plain," said the widowed Queen of Navarre, "that you were never meant to be a monk."

Brother Nightingale began to sing the third verse of the Queen's Romance—

"Throughout my days, the love
Of girl unknown or seen
Hath urged me on to prove
Worthy of her, my queen.

Most good it is that I
Should serve where I adore.
Nothing do I deserve,
Then grant me all the more!"

"Those two last lines are yours, not at all mine," said Marguerite of Navarre.

PETER

An Episode in the Life of Pierrot and Pierrette

Pierrot and Pierrette fell in love. That was to be expected, Pierrots and Pierrettes always do. But Pierrette and Pierrot got married, which is rather unusual: and they had a family, which I never before heard of—in the case of a Pierrot and Pierrette.

The family was only one in number, a little boy, who was serious-minded from the very beginning, though you would have thought the baby belonging to such a married pair must necessarily be a kind of joyful imp. Pierre was his Christian name, but he liked Peter best; which shows the sort of child he was.

He was pale and peaky, with large, grave, dark eyes. They were eyes that, from the first, asked questions, reflected thoughts, and criticised. Peter wondered why his parents wore white sugar-loaf hats and neck-frills, and why mother's skirts were so short and the *pompons* on her shoes so large. His father's long white blouse and baggy trousers, trimmed with *pompons* like those on Madame Pierrette's shoes, puzzled and worried him. Other little boys' fathers wore coats and trousers, creaky boots, and silk hats or bowlers, gold watches that ticked were in their pockets, and they wore shirts with collars, and neckties with pins. He wished his own father could be like them, with a sensible red or brown face, not one chalked all over white.

Peter wondered why he was not washed and dressed, made to learn, and let play like other people's little Peters. To be carried in the pocket of his father's baggy trousers and pulled out like a kitten or a rabbit in the middle of some stage scene was a great trial to him. He hated being loaded into cannon and fired off, used as the top of a human pyramid, handed and bandied about or tossed like a ball from one person to another. It was neither comfortable nor dignified. Grown-up people sat in the theatre and laughed to see it done, but they would not have done it to their own little boys, nor, though all the little boys screamed with delight and clapped their hands at the sight of Peter's queer usage, would they have liked to be treated in that way.

"They'd cry, and kick and bite—they would!" Peter said to himself, "and why don't I? I wonder?"

He was always wondering, poor little Peter with the serious mind. But, most of all, he wondered why his parents—who had sweet voices and sang duets to the mandoline, *Au Clair De La Lune* and *Minette*, and other things—so that people applauded and asked for more—he wondered why, even at home, they preferred to converse in dumb show?

"Are you hungry, Peter?" Why couldn't father just ask that, instead of opening his mouth as wide as a red letter-box, and pointing down it, rubbing the front of his blouse with the palm of the other hand and chucking Peter under the chin with the toe of his left foot.

"Are you sleepy, Peter?" Why couldn't mother just ask *that*, instead of pretending to go to sleep with the palm of her hand for a pillow and then stroking Peter's face from the forehead down to the chin? It was so unreasonable, and took up so much more time, Peter couldn't help wondering . . .

There was another wonder, too, that gave him much

pain. He had learned to read, and, of course, took to the newspapers, which his parents only read when they contained notices of their own performances. When there weren't any notices, they said (in eloquent signs) that there was nothing in the papers; when there were bad notices, Pierrot used to signify that the critics were silly fellows, who did not know their business. When the notices were good, out came the mandolines and the bottle of *vin ordinaire*, and there were smoked sausages and Brie cheese for supper. Peter couldn't bear sausages or cheese, because, with legs of mutton, they were just the things that, on the stage at the theatre, Pierrot stole from various people, while hundreds of others looked on. It made Peter feel sick to read in the newspapers how many people were sent to prison for doing these things, and you may guess that it was not very long before he fell sick in bad earnest. His eyes were very bright and much too big, his feet felt light, and his head hot and large and heavy, and at night, when he laid it on the pillow of his little white bed, so many wheels seemed to be whirring round inside that he was glad to lift it up again. But by and by came a day when he could not lift it up at all! Oh! poor little Peter, who was too young and weak to bear so much wondering! Then Pierrette fell down on both knees at the left side of the pillow, and Pierrot on one knee at the right, and they clutched at their hearts with anxious gestures, and wrung their hands to signify despair. Then Pierrot slapped his forehead, and Pierrette clapped her hands, for she knew her husband had had an idea. When Pierrot had hobbled, leaning on a gold-headed cane, across the room, taken imaginary snuff and felt Peter's pulse, Pierrette knew that the doctor ought to be called in.

So the doctor was sent for, and came. He was quite unlike Pierrot's doctor, a brisk, sturdy, middle-aged gentleman, with kind eyes. He shook his head when he

touched the little wasted hand Peter held out to him, and said, "This should have been seen to before. You had better send him to the Children's Hospital." But Pierrette screamed and fainted, and Pierrot slapped his forehead and moaned in agony at the idea, and then upset the salts all over Pierrette, and Pierrette came to and boxed Pierrot's ears, and there was such a to-do that the doctor was glad to get away, saying as he left, "You professional people are all nerves and no brains. If you won't send him, you won't! but he *would* have had a chance if you had! Now . . . but I'll look in again. Get the prescription made up, give the medicine regularly, keep quiet if you can, don't worry him."

With these parting injunctions the doctor was gone. Pierrot emptied his pockets on the little bed, and found he had only eleven pence. Pierrette uttered a cry of agony. Then they fell into each other's arms and wept, and then the clock struck, and they took their bundle and started for the theatre. Peter did not get the medicine but the quiet of the empty room did almost as much good.

He dozed a little. Then—something made him open his eyes. On a chair by the bed, with her face turned towards him, sat a tall, wonderful lady. She wore a gown of neutral brown, made high and simply fitting, but the grand sweep of her shoulders and the splendid pillar of her throat showed the beauty of her form, even to a child's eyes. Her face was full of sunlight and of shadow, and her eyes were grey and tender, and deep as mountain lakes. The sorrow of all the world and all its joy seemed to have rolled over her like waves, and, when she smiled, Peter felt that the sweetness of it was more than he could bear. She stooped over him and took him in her arms and cherished him, and he asked, with her lips upon his eyelids and his head upon her bosom—

"Please, why did you never come before?"

She said, and her voice was like the hush of the wind amongst the pine-tops, and the breaking of waves upon a sunset shore—

"Because you never wanted me so much."

"Please take me back with you!" said Peter.

"Oh! then, I must," she said, "for when a child asks for that it is always granted. But your father and mother, Peter—will they not grieve?"

"Not so much," said old young Peter wisely, "if you will give them something to play with instead of me. A poodle, that can sit up and lie dead."

She laughed very softly and yet clearly, as a thrush laughs, swinging on the topmost bough of a cherry tree in the dawning of a bright June day, and the corners of her eyes crinkled so like the corners of her lips that Peter wanted to kiss them as well.

"They shall have the poodle," she said.

So the lovely, wonderful lady promised that Pierrot and Pierrette should have a clever poodle instead of Peter, and Peter was glad, because he knew now they would not fret long about him. A poodle would suit them so much better than a little boy.

Then the lady gathered Peter in her arms and rose to go, and then her dark dress became white and shiny, and such a radiance streamed from her eyes and shone in her face as she looked at Peter, that he smiled for joy, and said—

"Are you a fairy, please?" For Pierrot had told him about the fairies in the Christmas pantomime.

"I am Death," the lady said, and carried him away to a land more glorious and happy than Peter had ever dreamed of.

* * * * * *

When Pierrot and Pierrette came home from the theatre—very late, for they had forgotten Peter and supped with a

friend—they found their little boy gone. In his place, sitting upright on the little bed, was a great white poodle. The dog looked knowing, and the moon, that peeped in through the window of the garret where Pierrot and Pierrette lived, looked wise.

"My child, my boy!" cried Pierrette in dumb show; "somebody has stolen him!"

"Let us travel through the wide world until we find him!" gestured Pierrot, throwing on a cloak and taking a walking-stick as he extended the other hand to Pierrette.

The poodle sat up. Pierrot began to laugh.

"That is certainly an intelligent animal," said he.

"Ask it where Peter is?" suggested Pierrette.

Pierrot did, and the beast lay dead. It was clearly no use to seek for Peter.

So Pierrot, Pierrette, and the poodle lived together all their lives. Neither Pierrot nor Pierrette ever knew what had become of Peter, but the poodle was wiser than they.

THE COMPLEAT HOUSEWIFE

The Story of a Battaglio Pie

So many male members of the British aristocracy find their feminine complements in American social circles, that I guess I won't astonish any one that reads this when I announce myself, *née* Lydia Randolph, of Savannah—described in Glatt's *Guide to the United States* as "the chief city and commercial metropolis of Georgia"—as a slip of Southern wild orange grafted by marriage upon one of the three-hundred-year-old citron trees that are the pride of the greenhouses at Hindsway Abbey, Deershire.

Bryan—my husband is Sir Bryan Corbryan, sixteenth baronet of that name—was travelling in the Southern States when we met at the Jasper House at Thunderbolt, a fashionable early summer resort on the Warsow River. I had seen clean-made, springy, red-and-white, handsome Englishmen before, but there was something particularly distinguished about this one, or it seemed so. We were neighbours at the *table d'hôte*, and Sir Bryan had no idea how to eat green corn until I gave him an object lesson, and was wonderfully ignorant about simple things like fried egg-plant. Chicken gumbo reminded him of Indian curries, and he thought our green oysters as good as those of Ostend, but he drew the line at raw canvas-back and roast ices. We became so friendly over the *carte de jour* that Mamie—my second sister—parodied the old rhyme about love—

"Oh, 'tis food, 'tis food, 'tis food
That makes the world go round!"

she sang, as we moved towards the ladies' drawing-room.

"*Grow* round, you mean," said I scornfully, as the elevator carried us upwards, and the coloured boy grinned.

"After all," said Mamie thoughtfully—she is considered a very brainy girl by her school professors—"without food there would be no love. People would just pine and dwindle and die. Wouldn't they, Belvidere?"

"Iss, missus," said the lift-boy, catching and biting the quarter Mamie tossed him.

Well, next day we met Sir Bryan again. After that it was usually me. We all greatly enjoyed that June holiday in our differing ways. Marma simply drank in the restfulness of a hotel with three or four hundred guests in it, after the harassing worries of a household consisting of a husband, three daughters, and seven servants, and rocked and fanned from morning until night. For us young folks there were drives, fishing parties, walking excursions, and bathing sociables. My! the time flew, but the world stood still quite suddenly, or seemed to, when Sir Bryan asked me to be his wife. He said I was the loveliest girl on the Salts or the face of Creation, and he just burned with longing to carry me home as his bride to Deershire, and walk with me under the Tudor oaks he had told me about. Tudor oaks! And a girl whose father was making a corner in cotton on Bay Street at that very moment! But Sir Bryan appeared to see no discrepancy, and that corner in cotton made me quite an heiress, as it afterwards turned out.

Well, our wedding—Bryan's and mine—was solemnised at the Savannah Episcopal Church, fronting Madison Square. It was a jessamine and tuberose wedding, cart-loads of those blooms being employed. I had privately begged Bryan to send home for the first baronet's gold

inlaid suit of tilting armour to be married in; but he begged to be excused, as wrought steel is such heavy summer-wear. Otherwise, he thought, considering the almost Presidential amount of handshaking a bridegroom usually has to go through, gauntlets would be rather an advantage than otherwise.

We spent a week of our honeymoon trip at Newport and one on the ocean, and two in that Eden of the modern Adam and Eve, Paris, and then we went home to Deershire and Hindway Abbey, driving the whole way from the station under festoons of parti-coloured flags, while the bells rang peals of welcome, and school-children and tenants cheered, and the guard of honour supplied by the Deershire Mounted Volunteers kept up a deafening clatter behind that made the spirited horses more spirited still: and then we turned in between old stone entrance gate-pillars crested with heraldic monsters like those on Bryan's coat-of-arms, and drove along the wide avenue under those Tudor oaks Bryan had talked about, and the Abbey, a glorious old building of ancient red brick faced with white stone, rose up before us, girt with its ancient terraced walks and clipped hedges of yew and holly, and smothered in roses and wistaria to its mossy tiled roofs and the very tips of its twisted chimneys.

"Oh," I cried to Bryan, "never tell *me* that gentlemen in trunks and ladies in farthingales, or *beaux* in powdered periwigs and laced brocade coats, and *belles* in hoops and furbelows don't promenade here in the witching hours of night under the glimpses of the waning moon, because I simply shan't believe you!"

"So you like it?" said my husband, looking pleased and proud.

"Like it!" was all I could say; but it seemed enough for Bryan. He took my hand and led me into our home, and the red light of the great wood fire upon the gleaming

hearth-dogs of the old wainscoted hall shone upon two very happy people.

Then—I just hate to think of it!—hard upon all the cheering and curtseying welcome came the blue-enveloped cablegram from Marma, with its brief, sharp, clearly worded message of misfortune. Parpa had had a spell of hemiplegia in consequence of a slump in lumber, which he had tided through, poor dear, at the expense of his health. I cried and begged to go back to the States at any risk, but Bryan was firm. I could see that if I had owned three fathers, all lying in imminent peril, it would have been just the same. *He* would go, he declared, in my place. Parpa had two daughters on the spot, and a son ought to be an appreciated change.

I loathed to let him go, but I loved him for wanting to. I put my head right down on his dear tweed shoulder and told him so. He lifted up my face and kissed it.

"You'll be brave, little woman"—I am five feet eight—"and, Phee, I know you will take care of your mistress?" he said, looking hard at my coloured maid.

"Bless Grashus, Marsa, co'se I will!" said Phee, with a wide, brilliant smile.

And within two hours my husband had driven from the door of his ancestral dwelling, and I was a grass widow. I made this observation to Phee.

"Lor', honey," said she, "ain' dat heaps better dan bein' de real kin'?"

I had not regarded the situation previously from this point of view, and I could not deny that Phee was in the right. But I cried myself to sleep all the same, and woke feeling pretty cheerful, and when I had bathed and dressed, and breakfasted in the morning-room that looked upon the quaintest of old-world gardens bounded with rose-hedges and centred with a splendid four-faced dial, lifted aloft upon a twisted and carven pillar, adorned with the

motto, *Nunc sol nunc umbra*, I received a respectful message from Mrs. Pounds, the housekeeper, asking for an audience.

She was a handsome old lady in a lace cap and rustling black silk gown, and when she had handed me a bunch of keys similar to the bunch that dangled at her waist, she launched into many revelations concerning household affairs, to which I fear I listened absently, being mentally absorbed upon the question of the arrival or non-arrival of Bryan's letter. Joy! a guardedly expressed but distinctly affectionate telegram was handed to me before Mrs. Pounds had got through. Bryan had engaged a deck cabin on the biggest of the Atlantic ferries, and would steam out of Southampton Docks precisely at two p.m., A letter was following. Dear telegram! Dear letter! Dearest Bryan! My eyes swam with tears. Oh, how I meant to try to be an ideal wife! How I——

"It being a rainy morning, and unpleasant for walking or driving," I heard Mrs. Pounds say, "and the Abbey being one of the most interesting Tudor residences in the county, perhaps her ladyship would wish to go over the house."

The notion was invigorating.

"Why, certainly!" I exclaimed. "I should just adore to!"

"If her ladyship permits," said Mrs. Pounds, with refrigerating stateliness, "I will act as her ladyship's guide!"

I thanked her and rang for Phee.

"Did her ladyship wish the young black person to attend her?" Mrs. Pounds inquired, with a perfectly glacial stiffness.

"I guess so," I said; "since she is to live in this house, she may as well learn her way about it—the sooner, the better."

"As her ladyship pleases," said Mrs. Pounds, and

unhooked her bunch of keys with a shiver of virtuous resignation. Then she said that if her ladyship permitted, she would lead the way, and glided out of the morning-room.

What a refined and subtle pleasure there lies in going over every nook and corner of a noble, ancient house, in traversing the echoing galleries, looking from the mullioned windows upon garden, terrace, alley, pleasaunce, and park, in gazing at ancient pictures painted by inspired hands long since dust, in fingering antique china and glorious old tapestries, tapping ringing corselets and engraven helms, touching gleaming or rusty weapons, looking respectfully on chairs that have upheld historical personages, and carven, canopied beds in which they have slept! That pleasure was to me intensified a thousandfold because the house was Bryan's and mine.

Phee was as enthusiastic in her way as I was, though my way was less ebullient. Her vociferations of "Lordy! Lawd sakes! Bless grashus!" with other kindred ejaculations, seemed to pain Mrs. Pounds a good deal. But presently that rustling embodiment of respectability threw open a door on the first floor landing of what she termed the west wing, saying—

"This is called Lady Deborah's room, which, although carefully kept free from dust, as her ladyship sees, has never been occupied since the death of Lady Deborah, which occurred of quinsy in the reign of King George the Second, and the lifetime of the tenth baronet, her son. The portrait in oils by Jongmans, set in panel over the chimney-piece, is considered to be a speaking likeness. Her ladyship is wearing the very cap and gown in which she is said to haunt this house, and that book that lies upon the escritoire in the window is the identical volume she is said to carry in her hand."

"Fo' de Lawd!" I heard Phee say gutturally behind me. As for myself, I felt no chill of awe. The triumph of

being the mistress of an undeniably ancient, undoubtedly ghost-haunted abbey fired my blood and thrilled my whole being. I advanced to the escritoire, an ancient, brass-handled piece of furniture with flowers in Dutch marquetry, and opened the book—a dilapidated volume in brown leather binding—at the title-page. "The Compleat Housewife," I read, "or Accomplished Gentlewoman's Companion. A Collection of Prov'd Recipys in Cookery and Confectionary, With Instructions for the Making of Wines and Cordyals, Also Above 200 Family Specificks, viz. Drinks, Syrups, Salves, Oyntments and Cures For Varyous Distempers. By Eliz. Smith; The Second Edycion. London; Printed for J. Pynkerton agaynst S'Dunstan's Church in Fleet street in the Reign of His Ma'sty King George II."

Phee had backed nervously into the corridor. With the book in my hand, I glanced a friendly adieu towards the portrait of Lady Deborah, whose mob-cap and black silk calash encircled a wrinkled yet pleasant and placid countenance, embellished with the fine streakings of rosy red one sees on a good eating apple, and ornamented by huge round spectacles rimmed with silver.

"Thank you," I said to the housekeeper, "but I think I have seen enough for one while. So many stairs are fatiguing to a person accustomed to elevators."

"Her ladyship means lifts?" said Mrs. Pounds, making allowances for the foreigner.

"Not at all," I said. "But I guess you mean elevators." The stout brown leather volume under my arm inspired me to ask a question: "With regard to Lady Deborah, Mrs. Pounds, you will not think it a very odd question if I ask you, Have you ever seen her?"

"I will not deceive her ladyship," said the housekeeper. "There have been alarms among the maids and reports circulated by guests long, long before my time, and *in*

my time, but never having viewed the apparition myself, I never gave such credit for an instant. Ghostly hauntings argue unquiet consciences, I have always understood; and what should a virtuous, housekeeping lady, such as Lady Deborah was, by all acounts—and the almshouses she built and endowed are the pride of the village to this day!—have upon her conscience? Her still-room is in the wing, though now turned into a store-room; and my jams, not to say jellies, are made after recipes in ancient writing which I believe to have been hers."

"And this must have been the cookery-book out of which she copied them," said I, glancing into the well-thumbed volume, "which I am going to carry away and look over."

"Oh, my—my lady!" exclaimed Mrs. Pounds, paling slightly and forgetting the third person in her perturbation. "I beg your ladyship's pardon, but your ladyship had best not. They do say——"

"Ah! what do they say?" I asked.

"They say," said Mrs. Pounds, nervously smoothing her muslin apron, "that whenever or however that book is removed from this room, it is always found in its place upon Lady Deborah's escritoire next morning. Which would argue, my lady, that she fetches it back herself!"

My Southern blood ran less warmly through my veins, but I held my head up bravely.

"Has any one put that tradition to the test, to your knowledge?" I asked.

Mrs. Pounds pursed her lips and shook her head.

"Very well!" I said in my stateliest manner, and I swept down the corridor, whose ancient oaken planking creaked under my high-heeled French shoes.

It still rained. Two huge fires of apple-wood burned in my great panelled drawing-room, where tall, carved cabinets of Indian ebony, Dutch marquetry, and Chinese

lacquer, crowned with lovely vases and bowls of Oriental pottery, stood sentinel on the edges of the worn but beautiful Turkey carpet. I sank into a low, deep chair near the lower hearth-place and stared up at the carvings over the bossed mantelshelf, representing Dante and Beatrice, and other personages from the *Divina Commedia*, all wearing Elizabethan ruffs, trunk hose and farthingales. The rain splashed from the leaden mouths of the lion-headed water-pipes upon the flags of the terrace. It sounded like the tap-tapping of high-heeled brodequins. There was a high-backed, narrow, black oak chair on the opposite edge of the rug, an armless, stiff, uncomfortable chair, and upholstered in gilded leather—or leather that had once been gilded, fastened on with gilt nails, or nails that were once gilt, driven through little round pieces of faded green and red felt. There are articles of furniture that irresistibly evoke in the mind fancy portraits of the people who must have owned them. As I looked at that chair, its outlines became obscure. . . . Gradually enormously hooped petticoats of strong, flowered brocade, green with a shrimp-pink pattern of roses, came into view, from the border of which peeped the ends of narrow, square-toed shoes adorned with silver buckles. Languidly and without surprise my eyes travelled from these upwards to the cobweb-lace border of a very fine Swiss—I should say muslin—apron. In the centre of the apron were a pair of withered hands adorned with antique jewelled rings, and covered to the bony knuckles with black silk mittens. I followed the mittens to the lace ruffles of the sleeves, which matched the cinnamon satin peaked bodice—so tightly laced that one could hardly credit a human body being inside—trimmed with heavy silver lace and having puffed *paniers* on either side. The neck of the bodice was cut square and filled in with soft folds of muslin, and about a withered throat I caught the gleam of a gold and amber necklace. The

body I have described ended in the face I had expected. The peaked chin, the pursed-up lips, the withered rose-apple cheeks, slightly pinched nose, and huge silver-rimmed spectacles—all belonged to Lady Deborah's portrait. Almost with gladness I recognised the rolled-up, powdered hair, crowned with the enormous, lappeted mob-cap. It affected me strangely that the old lady did not wear the black silk calash or bonnet, but carried it slung over her thin arm by its wide strings, and that a tortoiseshell-headed cane not represented upon the canvas —a kit-kat—leaned against a little Indian cabinet of striped calamander wood which stood near.

Bryan's family ghost—mine, by virtue of my rights as Bryan's wife! The cold chills and crisping sensations of fear were banished by the pleasant glow of pride which stole over my being as I gazed upon the dear old lady. I had so much regretted Bryan's not having any mother or pleasant elderly women relatives living for me to be cosy and confidential with—and here was one! Not living, but still visible; not to be felt, perhaps, but possibly to be heard. All this while Lady Deborah stared piercingly in my direction. She was not looking at me, but at the open book upon my knee, which had nearly slipped off it, and just as I had made up my mind to venture on a very delicate cough, she spoke, in a dry, rasping old voice—

"Child, if you thought to persuade me you was asleep, you may spare yourself the trouble, for I have seen your eyelids blink these dozen times."

"Oh, Lady Deborah——" I began, but the old lady caught up her cane and rapped me over the knuckles—hard, with the end of it!

"Is that the way you give greeting to your elders, Mistress Impertinence?" she cried shrilly. "Truly, I don't know where the young women are coming to! Dry

your eyes, chit!"—they were watering from the smart of my rapped knuckles—"and let me see you make a proper reverence!"

Her cane was hovering. I hastily got out of my chair and made the lowest cotillon-curtsey I had ever achieved.

"Pish!" ejaculated the Lady Deborah Corbryan, with perfectly withering contempt. She waved me aside and rose to her feet. "Fold the arms, thus, cross the legs at the knees, bend them outwards, sink—and recover." She sank as though the floor had opened under her, she recovered—apparently upon the point of vanishing. "Madam," she said, with an agreeable smile which revealed a set of boxwood teeth strung on gold wire, "I vow I am vastly happy to see your ladyship, and venture to hope that your ladyship enjoys good health?"

"Perfectly, thank you. And—dear Lady Deborah, you can't begin to know how real glad I am to see you. I was just expiring to have you drop in!" I stopped, for the old lady's eyes were beginning to snap behind her spectacles.

"Drop in," she said severely, "is not a seemly expression for a young woman. But be seated, child, and tell me your name. . . . Lydia Randolph, of Georgia, d'ye say? My young descendant was travelling in the East, I presume, when he encountered you? I hoped, for the honour of the Corbryans, you was a relative of the Grand Turk, or of the Sophy, at least, for our family is very ancient and honourable, let me tell you!"

After an effort or two I gave up the task of trying to persuade Lady Deborah that the State of Georgia was located in America, which she persisted in calling "the Virginias." She was aware that a person named Smith had devoted his life to the exploration and colonisation of New England, and that the English, in 1664, had held possession of New York. She approved of those com-

modities which came from my country. American rum, cane sugar, coffee, and tobacco, and helped herself to snuff from an amethyst-topped box as she approved.

"My young descendant will take you up to London in the family coach when he returns (I had explained why I figured as a lonely bride) and initiate you into the pleasures of the gay world of fashion," she said. "You must see Mr. Garrick in *Hamlet*, the dear, ingenious man! and Mrs. Siddons as Belvidera—Lud! how she frightened me in her frenzy. And Mr. Johnson—you must see that great, if uncouth, personage—and Mr. Reynolds, the painter—he must be prevailed upon to paint you, for you are not ill-looking, chit, and would be positively handsome was you dressed. Dear me, what junketings I had in my time! . . . Ranelagh, Hampstead, Vauxhall, Marybone Gardens and Totnam Farm . . . where we went for syllabubs new from the cow—and the *beaux* quarrelled among them which should have the glass I had drank out of. For I was a toast and a beauty, and a sad coquette, too, my dear!" said the old lady, complacently nodding her great cap. "Sir George Cockerell, of Bangwood—a mon'sous rake—tried to carry me off from Bath Wells in a coach with four, in broad day, for which Sir Bryan ran him through, my dear, under the second rib on the left side—and—'You've nicked it, Corbryan,' says Sir George, 'and—and I lose!—but I don't apologise,' and swooned away. And D'Arcy D'Urfée writ a poem upon a pair of fringed gloves I wore at an assembly, and my Lord Chesterfield himself hath paid me compliments. But beauty is a passing flower, child, and so I found it when I took the smallpox and rose from my bed—hung with scarlet cloth, by orders of His Majesty's own physician—to find my face all pitted and my beautiful eyebrows and lashes gone—to a hair!"

"Oh, how dreadful!" I cried. "And—and Sir Bryan?"

" Sir Bryan took to the claret bottle in his sorrow, and to the punch-bowl," said Lady Deborah.

" Drank ! " I cried. " Oh, how dreadful ! "

" Tush, child ! " snapped the old lady. " Don't all our men drink ? And our women, too, for that matter ! Liquor was made for man, we have the authority of the Ancients upon it ! But Sir Bryan took to other things as well—gaming at the Grecian and White's, and other follies—and I was a very unhappy woman for a time. Then I found comfort, chit—in a book with which you are acquainted ! "

" The Scriptures, madam ? " I said, my lips trembling with sympathy and admiration of the simple piety of the poor, deserted wife.

" My dear mother's Cookery Book. You have it in your lap, child, and by constant study of it I became the most notable housewife in my county. . . . Let me trust you have read and pondered its pages," said Lady Deborah, nodding solemnly. " 'Tis as unseemly for a young lady to enter the world without a knowledge of the art of carving, for instance, as to appear at a ball without her sacque and paniers and hooped petticoat. Thou canst unjoint a bittern, I trust ? souse a capon, unlace a crane, dismember a heron, lift a swan and rear a bustard with elegance and discretion ? "

" I—I am afraid not," I stammered, keeping the tears back with difficulty as I realised my ignorance of English social customs. " You see, Parpa wished me to be educated in the State where I was raised, and this is my first visit to England. Possibly I could souse a capon, but swans are such vicious things, I should never dare to lift one. And as to rearing a bustard, I've never seen one yet."

" Lydia, I vow you horrify me ! No more, child, or I shall have a fit of the spleen ! " Lady Deborah fanned herself with the cunningest tortoiseshell fan, and sniffed

at a silver apple pricked full of holes that hung from her *châtelaine.* "I shall have to take a dram of gentian wine or carduus-seed bruised in old sack," she added. "Either is sovereign, both for spleen and the vapours. Remember that, should you happen to be attacked by these distempers."

"I'm sure I hope I shan't be!" said I fervently.

"Rue-water is also excellent in fits," said the old lady loftily. "My rue-water was justly celebrated. I distributed it on Thursdays to all the poor who chose to bring bottles to contain it. The juice of the plant distilled, and mingled in the strongest brown ale, a gallon and a half to a pint. 'Twas extraordinary much sought by the labourers on Sir Bryan's estate. Even more eagerly begged for and carried away was my Palsy and Surfeit Water composed of the juice of poppies, mint, cloves, and coriander seeds, mingled with crushed loaf-sugar and the best French brandy."

"I guess so!" I said.

"Did you suffer from dropsy, child, or gout," said Lady Deborah, "you would find in that volume the absolute specific."

I said I was afraid I had never had gout, or dropsy either.

"Consumption, then, or sore throat?" said Bryan's ancestress anxiously.

I had had sore throat, and allowed as much.

"For sore throat, an excellent water is made of a peck of snails laid in hyssop, bruised and distilled in new milk," said Lady Deborah, "and drunk fasting. By discreet use of this cordial any sore throat can be cured."

"Why, of course," said I. "The mere thought of the snails would effect the cure. One would get well directly—at least, I should!"

"Then in the treatment of jaundice I have worked

absolute wonders, child, with conserve of prepared earthworms, turmeric, and rhubarb, mixed. The complaint flies before it, positively," continued Lady Deborah.

"Or the patient does," I said to myself, but inwardly, remembering the cane.

"You never was bit by a mad dog, was you, chit?" was the astonishing question that came next.

"Good gracious, no!" I exclaimed energetically.

"Because sage, garlic, treacle, and tin filings boiled in a quart of strong mead or clary will serve in this disorder," said Lady Deborah. "You pour it into the party bitten by a quarter of a pint at a time."

"I should never pour it," I said decidedly. "I should be too scared the party would bite *me*, and then there'd be two of us, foaming and acting awful!"

"But supposing you was pitted after a bout of smallpox, and desired to efface the scars," continued Lady Deborah, just as though I had not spoken, "you would find on the hundredth page the worthy Dr. Burgess's recipe for a salve, of oil of tartar, pounded docks and green goose fat, considered infallible." She sighed meditatively.

"Did you——?" I hinted, as delicately as I could.

"The ingredients must be mingled at the time of the new moon, when Venus is in the ascendant, and Jupiter is an evening star. I fear, chit," she sighed, "that my knowledge of astronomics was faulty. So little result I obtained that for a while I was plunged in despair."

"I'm real sorry, dear Lady Deborah!" I said gently.

"But I despaired not long," resumed Bryan's ancestress. "I shut myself in my still-room and kitchen—not to weep and lament, but to work. I had ceased to be the queen of my husband's heart, but I learned to be the goddess of his table. Men are stomach first, child, and heart afterwards. What man would not lose a lover to gain so accomplished a cook as I became?" Her lean, narrow

figure dilated, her expanding hoops seemed to fill the room, her keen grey eyes flamed like burning knots of lightwood behind her glasses. "My fame was sounded throughout the county. 'Lady Deb's battaglio pie,' the bloods toasted now, instead of Lady Deb's skin of cream and roses, and Lady Deb's salmigondin, her patty royal, her cock salmon with buttered lobster, and her tansy fritters, they raved upon, instead of her bright eyes, red lips, pearly teeth, and clustered hair. And I bore it, chit! and curtsied and thanked 'em kindly, though I wished the dishes might surfeit 'em, with all my heart!"

"Oh, poor Lady Deborah!" I said, my heart in my voice.

"I blame them not now!" She lifted her lean hand. "There are no men that love not good eating and drinking—even the saints that denied themselves; and for the women—I'm one of 'em myself, chit, or was—and know whether they sip nectar from blossoms, as they would have the silly men believe, or have at the cold chine and apple-tart in the buttery on the sly, an hour before the dinner-bell."

She fanned herself, and producing from a deep, swinging pocket a thin, black bone rod with a little hand carved at the end, put it to its definite purpose with an energy that made me shiver. William Blake drew the ghost of a flea, I remembered, as Lady Deborah pocketed the little black rod again.

"Please go on, madam. . . . You interested me *so* much about Sir Bryan. Did he reform and become a real devoted husband again?" I asked timidly.

"I tell thee, Lyddy—they call you Lyddy for short, don't they?" resumed Lady Deborah—"he was mine from his shoe-buckle to his wig-tie. He worshipped the tiles of my kitchen—blue-and-white Dutch, and of a pretty fancy. He took glory to himself in the envy of other

men; fox-hunting lords and squires, fat-jowled justices of the peace, doctors of divinity, and doctors of law. He never wearied to his dying day of the triumphs of my cookery, especially roasted sucking-pig stuffed with farced chestnuts, and battaglio pie."

"I guess that's good, anyhow!" I said. "It sounds so."

"'Tis made of young chickens, squab pigeons, quails, partridges and larks," said the ghost of Lady Deborah, drying a shadowy tear. "You truss them, put 'em in your dish lined with rich paste, add sweetbreads, cocks-combs, a quart of oysters, sliced sheep's tongues, the marrow of a dozen bones, cloves, mace, nutmegs, the yolks of hard eggs, and forced-meat balls. . . . Cover with butter, pour in a pint of cream, and draw the paste over the pie. When done——"

"It's soon done, I guess," said I, for the recital made me feel quite hungry. "My! it must have been rich!"

"That is why I was left a widow, my dear," said the poor old ghost of Lady Deborah, applying the ghost of a lace pocket-handkerchief—darned—to her eyes.

"Through—through a battaglio pie?" I gasped, appalled by the savour of tragedy that rose from the dish.

"Through a battaglio pie. Mr. Pope made use of the incident in his *Moral Essays*," said Lady Deborah, "where 'tis a jowl of salmon and not a pie. Alas, yes! Odious as it sounds, I was the cause of my Bryan's too early end. Year by year he had, thanks to the perfection of my cookery, become more and more addicted to the pleasures of the table. Racing, gaming, hunting, had become in his eyes the mere means to gain the appetite for fresh enjoyment. His fine complexion had become a dusky red, his chiselled features swelled, his eyes retired behind cushions of fat, his waist vanished, and three chins depended upon his laced cravat."

"Oh!" I cried in horror.

"He drank hugely, but his drinking was moderate in proportion to his eating," said Sir Bryan's widow. "Too well I remember the odious event. . . . 'Twas his name-day; he had five boon companions join him at the table, I put forth all my powers fitly to celebrate the anniversary. There could not be a prettier supper than that my husband sat to—not if I was to die this minute—I crave pardon, dear Lydia, for forgetting that I am dead! The first course was roasted pike and smelts—being June, pike was in season. Westphalia ham and young fowls, marrow puddings, haunch of venison roasted, ragout of lamb, sweetbreads, *fricassée* of young rabbits, umbles, a dish of mullets, roasted ducks, and custards."

"And six men sat down to a supper like that?" I said, feeling my eyes opening to their widest extent.

"Nay, child, that was only the first course," said Lady Deborah, sniffing at her silver pomander. "The second course was a dish of young pheasants, a dish of soles and eels, a potato-salad, a jowl of sturgeon, a dish of tarts and cheese-cakes, a rock of snow with syllabubs, *and* that fatal, that ever-to-be-regretted battaglio pie!" She wiped her eyes and fanned herself. "'Twas the crown of the banquet. . . . Sir Bryan and his guests called for a fresh magnum of claret when it appeared. . . . 'Gentlemen and boon companions,' said he, with the drops of perspiration standing on his purple forehead, and his wig pushed back—I can see it now, for I was peeping through the old buttery dish-slide the servants scarce ever used—'Gentlemen, here's another bumper to the health of Lady Deborah Corbryan, the best wife and the best cook in the Four Kingdoms!' And the gentlemen tossed down the wine, child, but they were full to the throats. Justice Sir Barnwell Plumptree and Sir George Cockerell (for he and Bryan became great friends in later years), Nainby Friswell and Mr. Selwyn, and Colonel Sir Harry Firebrace of the King's Dragoons.

They could only look and water at the chops as my dear Sir Bryan cut into the battaglio pie. He cleared a platter full and wiped up the gravy with crust. 'Do ye check?' says he in scorn of the others. 'Do ye balk at the best dish in Christendom? I've supped already, but I wager ye a guinea to a tester all round that I finish the dish! They took the bet, child, and Sir Bryan put ladle to dish. The ladle dropped with a clatter . . . a surge of blackish purple rose from his chins to his crown. . . . 'Death and fire!' says he, 'you've won your money!' and fell, and never uttered word again until he had been blooded by three chirurgeons one after the other, and had had the actual cautery applied. Oh, my dear! Then he came to himself, and 'Is that thou, Deb?' says he. 'I always loved thee, lass! Tell me the truth now, do I live or die?' And the doctor shook his head. 'No hope?' says Sir Bryan. 'Why, then, I'll e'en die as I have lived. Bring me the dish here—I'll e'en finish the rest o' the battaglio pie and turn the tables on Plumptree and the others.' And he did, child—he did. And I lived to wear out my weeds and con over my cookery book but a dozen years after him, and now I'm dead"—the poor lady sobbed—"I do it still, chit—I do it still! My hapless spirit is bound up in the yellow pages of that cookery book. I know not when my bondage shall cease, and rest be mine at last!"

"Poor lady—unhappy ghost!" I cried. "Will nothing bring you peace?"

You would have known you had been interviewing a ghost by the fading outlines of Lady Deborah's form and features, and the way in which the black oak chair upholstered with old gilt leather showed through the hooped skirts of green and pink brocade. Her vanishing lips framed but two other words . . .

"Battaglio pie," she said, and was gone in an instant;

and with a crash the cookery book fell to the floor, and I sat up, wondering whether I had been dreaming? On the whole, I guessed I had not. When I picked up the prostrate cookery book, I knew I had not, for one of the many-times dogs'-eared pages was doubled over in a perfectly fresh place, *and the page bore the famous recipe for battaglio pie.*

The post that followed brought my promised letter. The next day brought a marconigram from Bryan. Marconi is hardly the language of love, but it did at a pinch. Parpa was no worse, it said, and I was not to be anxious. Indeed, by the time the liner picked up her pilot off Sandy Hook, the bulletins were so favourable that Bryan decided to return right away, Parpa being quite out of danger. He did return—one of our great Atlantic ferryboats being on the point of starting—and I marconied a message which hit the ship 1,065 miles west of the Lizard, to say I was well and happy, and learning to cook!

That was so. I had respectfully replaced Lady Deborah's cookery book upon her escritoire, after copying the fatal and famous recipe for battaglio pie. . . . I had made friends with the ruler of the Abbey kitchen, and under her tuition was rapidly mastering the secret of flaky pastry.

June was scarcely over our heads; all the ingredients were procurable, though the heavy groan that burst from the head gamekeeper's bosom, when I demanded three young partridges, I never shall forget. He brought them, though, and I had but to amass the quail, the squab pigeon, the cockscombs, sweetbreads, oysters, sheep's tongues, and so forth, from other sources. Thus on the afternoon previous to Bryan's return, I lined a stately dish with rich pie-paste, I piled in all the good things, added the eggs, forcemeat, spices, cream and butter, and drew the cover over all, ornamenting it with devices cut with antique

pewter moulds that Lady Deborah herself may have used. I glazed the outside with egg-white. And then I saw the pie slide into a gentle oven, and knew my task would soon be done. An hour later, as I lay resting in my favourite corner of the spindle-legged, tapestry-covered sofa in the long drawing-room, I had a second visit from Lady Deborah. She wore her black silk calash this time, and behind her great silver-rimmed spectacles her eyes snapped and sparkled with a joy that was—was it malign? She spread out her rustling brocade skirts as I rose up, and responded to my hesitating curtsey with the grandest cheese I had ever seen.

"I am vastly obleeged, Lydia," she said, smiling her old cheeks into creases. "You have behaved monstrous genteely, child, and I feel that I shall owe my freedom to your generosity. I have taken measures that the reputation of the Abbey shall not suffer, as there is a lamentable lack of *ton* about a family residence without a ghost. Sir Umphrey, who got grant of the demesne from King Henry VIII, and, as you may have heard, murdered the abbot who took exception to the grant, has arranged to haunt the inhabited wings as well as the shut-up portion. You have also a third share in a banshee brought into the family by one of the Desmonds, who intermarried with us in 1606, and there is a hugely impressive death-watch in the wainscoting of your room. Therefore, I need have no scruples in taking the change of air so necessary for vapours."

She took her great calash and spreading brocades away. I forgot her—forgot the pie—forgot everything an hour later, in the joy of Bryan's arrival. With the aid of the housekeeper and by the advice of the cook, I had had prepared a real traveller's dinner, and at last my battaglio pie was placed upon the table before the master of the house.

Such a pie! a mountain of golden flaky crust, exhaling delicious, tempting, savoury odours. I looked across it at Bryan, and laughed in sheer delight at his astonishment.

"So this is the joke you have been keeping to yourself all the evening, Lydia, you little witch!" said Bryan, laughing too. "A pie—a monster pie—and a savoury pie, too, made by your own hands, what?" He sniffed the delicious steam with expanded nostrils and filled his glass with port. "Here's to the health of Lady Lydia Corbryan," he cried gaily, "the best wife and the best cook in the Four Kingdoms—not to mention the Realms beyond the Seas!"

Where had I heard those words—most of them—before? I grew dizzy as Bryan seized the silver pastry-knife and spoon and plunged into the depths of the battaglio pie. . . . A change seemed to have come over him, the outlines of his face and figure seemed to waver and alter as I gazed speechlessly, waiting for something to come. . . .

"I've dined already," my husband cried in a thick voice that frightened me, "but I'll bet you a sovereign to a sixpence that I finish the dish!"

"Bryan!" I screamed. "Bryan!" and barely recognised him to whom I appealed. That crimson face, with the moist shine of perspiration glossing it, the powdered wig pushed back from the swollen forehead, the piggish, twinkling eyes, gross, flabby mouth, and three chins dropping over the flowing lace cravat. . . . Strange to me . . . all strange, yet so horribly, horribly, familiar! I must have risen from my chair and rushed to him, for I found myself clinging to a man's arm and crying, "Don't touch it! If you love me, Bryan, don't touch it!" over and over again.

"Of course not, if you don't wish it, little woman!" said the dear familiar voice. Bryan was holding me, and the face I loved was pressed comfortingly to mine.

"Look here, Pet, I didn't mean to vex you. I'll throw it out of the window if you want me to."

"Y-yes!" I sobbed, with chattering teeth. "Th-throw it out . . . do, please!" and Bryan heaved up the huge pie-dish in his muscular hands.

"Open the window, please," he said, and I hurried to obey. The casement swung wide upon a square of star-jewelled darkness. . . . Did I hear a shrill, thin, eerie scream? Did I hear another casement crash open, somewhere in the west wing, as the battaglio pie was hurled into the night?

I asked Phee next morning to accompany me to Lady Deborah's room. The intrepid girl followed, only delaying to wind a thread of red marking-cotton nine times round her left thumb, and tuck her Aunt Dinah's hymn-book into what she termed "de bosom" of her gown. As I climbed the stairs, threaded recollected passages, and with just a little qualm of nervousness opened the not-to-be-forgotten door, a blast of cold air saluted me. The casement swung open, fragments of its shattered panes still jagging in the leads, and a yellowish snow of torn papers littered the floor. They were fragments of the cookery book, torn to atoms by a force unknown. . . . What force? The portrait of Lady Deborah gazed stonily from over the fireplace and made no answer.

What would have happened had Bryan indulged the hereditary instinct that led him to hunger, even after a full meal, for battaglio pie? Would he have ended existence like the unlucky glutton, his ancestor, in stertorous coma, unrelieved by depletion? Should I have died of grief, and haunted the Abbey in Lady Deborah's stead, a disconsolate, widowed shade, continually brooding over a battered edition of the *Compleat Housewife*? Who can say?

But it smelt wonderfully good. There have been hungry

moments when I have half regretted not tasting it, the sole achievement in the cookery line I am destined ever to accomplish.

I have never seen Lady Deborah since !

(*The recipes quoted by the ghost of Lady Deborah have been taken from a copy of* The Compleat Housewife *in the author's possession, dated 1733.*)

THE QUEEN OF RUATAVA

I

Said I—

"This will be the last Christmas I spend with the old regiment. Come March, I'll be sailing for home as a time-expired man." I spoke bluff and seeming all hearty, but my voice lacked the true ring, I knew.

"Wid them grillin' sinners in the barracks yandher," said Mack, waving his long cherry-wood pipe-stem in the direction of Hong Kong, "callin' down benefactions on the head av you." He had always shown a weakness for long words, instinctively selecting those which sounded most imposing. "Well I know the taste av that kind av envy. It is as bitther as soot in the throat, and as dhrying as sand upon the tongue."

He shook his lean, grizzled head and rapped with his Chinese fan upon the table, and sent the boy who responded to the signal to ask Mrs. Mack for another bottle of Bass. And as I dipped my nose into the creamy foam capping the tall glass, "Success to the Trade wind," says I, "that blows, and the screw that goes, seeing we have no sailing transports nowadays, when I turn my tail—for good—on Asia."

"I'll dhrink that toast wid you," said Mack, "an' add a rider av my own. Here's an asy thransit on the way you'll be thravellin' before three years are over you."

"What way will that be?" I asked.

"The way back," said Mack. "You will come out as a civilian like I am now, wid pockets to put your hands in,

and your hands in thim. You may come out wid a wife and childher, maybe, or you may come out widout; you may come out wid a title, or you may come out wid a ticket-av-lave. But come out you will—as I did, an' as others have, and will again, while the worruld sits in her sate." He blew a sigh and finished the beer. "I might be keeping a nate little *shebeen* an the road betune Cork and Queenstown, dispinsin' Crawford an' Beamish's porther to the thirsty, an' assisting the intimperate to dhrown the mimory av Father Matthew in whisky that never paid duty. I might be head keeper at Dromanagh Castle this minute, wid my lodge in the forest, an' my parquisites av horns an' hide, fur an' feather, my August five-pound notes from the gentlemen-visitors stoppin' at the Castle for the shootin', my March guineas from thim that come over to timpt Irish salmon to desthruction wid artificial flies as big as parrots, an' silver minnows wid clockwork arrangemints in their heads to make thim spin. All that an' more I might be at this momint—an' what am I instid? A tide-waiter in the Imperial Maritime Customs, wid mongril Portugees an' pig-headed low-caste Chinymen to lift an' right av me, chasin' opium-junks in a superannuated Governmint steam-launch, collectin' duties on powdhered toads, snakes'-heads, mummy-fat an' odher patint dhrugs, and adhministerin' impromptuous justice wid a revolver wheniver mutiny breaks out among these haythens. An' why? Why? Because wance Asia has laid the brown hand av her on your shouldher, an' you get the waft av her breath —wid all the spices av the East in it—acrass your eyes, you're hers for life as Kipperling says, and show me the man can say ut betther!"

"It's lucky for you if Mrs. Mack isn't listening," said I with a wink, "and you letting the cat out of the bag that way."

"Mrs. Mack will be afther having a bag av her own, I'll

go bail," said Mack, " though the baste inside may be av a differint complexion."

" Hear that now ! " screamed Mrs. Mack, from the other side of the oiled-paper partition separating Mack's office from the best parlour. " A different complexion ! And when did I ever look at another beside yourself ? But he's joking, Sargint Buckle; it's his indacent way av poking fun; and you'd plase me by paying no attintion to him at all, so you would."

" I won't, Mrs. Mack; I won't, ma'am," I replied, respectfully, remembering that Mrs. Mack was Mack's better-half, and the dispenser of bottled beer and other creature-comforts, and last, but not least, Jooly's mother. But in my heart I called out loud, and contradicted that assertion about the likeness of Miss Julia Mack to her father. For if two little twinkling greenish-hazel eyes, peeping out from beneath bushy hedges of reddish-grey, are the complement of a pair of melting black ones, shaded by eyebrows as black and as fine and delicate as though drawn in India-ink by a mapping pen; and if a skin like tanned hide may be compared to a complexion of roses and cream; and supposing a squab snub nose and broad blue-shaven Hibernian upper lip to be anything like an equivalent for an organ of the most approved classical shape and design, and a mouth which can only be compared to an opening blossom of the scarlet rhododendron; and if a bristly thatch of short-cropped grizzled capillary spikes can be accepted as an adequate exchange for a head of hair, dark chestnut in colour, and touched with ruddy gold on the edges of the broad silky waves and the delicate young tendrils that curled about the temples and nape—why, then, Jooly Mack and her male parent were very much alike indeed.

And here the perspicuous reader—one should always say civil things about the reader, I have been told !—will have caught a glimpse of insight into the state of things, and the

reason why the present writer, Peter William Buckle, colour-sergeant of No. 1 battalion of the "Forthshire Foot Sloggers," should find a furlough spent at the Portuguese settlement of Macao, forty miles to the westward of Hong-Kong, in the society of ex-Corporal Mack and his family an exceedingly agreeable variation upon the monotony of existence as conducted at the fortress. In a word—or a paragraph—I was in love with Jooly Mack. I am to this day; but that has nothing to do with the story. We finished the beer, and another bottle, as Mack put it, "to the heel av that," and he said with hearty hospitality, as he slapped me with staggering force upon the back—

"Sargint, of all the min I call my frinds there is no man I would sooner share a bottle, a saycret, or a fight wid than yourself. All I have," he waved a broad hairy hand tattooed with red and blue devices, so powerfully that quite a refreshing gust of air blew upon my face, "everything that is mine, is yours"—he corrected himself—"that is, everything but wan thing. And that," he looked me hard between the eyes, "you'll never ask me for, Payther Buckle."

At which I felt very low, for I could not but suspect that he meant his daughter, and I could not disguise from myself that I had harboured the intention of asking for her. Something—hardly the beer—got into my eyes and stung them confoundedly, and something else—possibly as a result from that slap on the back—began to swell inside my chest, until it nearly choked me. "I'll step out," I said, "and take a whiff of air," and I went.

Macao has a pleasant variety of, not hill and dale, but hillocks and dalelets within its little territory, and the air blows fresh and strong from the nearly surrounding sea. Without harbouring any definite purpose, I dimly guessed where my feet would lead me. Finding them bent upon following the usual track, I lighted a cigar. Before I threw

away the match I was in Mack's private garden. It lay by the side of the road a few rods from the proprietor's bungalow. It was a wonderful garden, comprising a lake with three islands—the biggest attaining to the diameter of a gig umbrella—an orchard, a jungle, a desert, a smiling valley, and a rocky mountain of blue slate. There was also a crockery pagoda. And I must not forget the summer-house, which would hold two people who were on sufficiently good terms with one another not to mind crowding.

My eye roved amongst slate slabs, squares of marble, needles of petrified wood, blocks of stalactite, Japanese dwarf cedars, dragon's-blood trees, and clumps of bamboo, green, black, speckled, scaly, smooth, square-stalked and round-stemmed in search of a natural object more precious and rare than all these exotic curiosities. Presently I found it, and coughed as gruffly as I knew how, grinding my boots upon the pink and blue gravel at the same time. Jooly gave a great start.

"Oh, Misther Buckle!" she cried, and up went her great eyes, and she pressed one hand, nice and white, but, like her foot, not too small, against her heart, until it seemed as though I were playing a part—the hero's for choice—in garrison theatricals.

"Ah! Misther Buckle!" she sighed, "can that indade be you?"

It was; though I never felt less myself than at that moment. All the way as I strode over the miniature bridges and round the gold-fish lake, and through a little jungle, and so forth, I had been maturing a great resolve.

"The girl is too big a match for me," I had kept saying, over and over again. "She has money—Mack must have put by a tidy lump. And I have saved little or nothing. Jooly, my black-eyed gazelle"—there was a pet one living in the pagoda—"you're beyond the reach of the likes of me, though if I opened my mouth wide enough and jogged

the branch ever so little, something tells me the pear's ripe for tumbling down. But I won't jog the branch! I won't betray Mack's confidences! We'll meet and part as friends to-day, and you'll marry a junior branch of a London rice-firm, or a pearl-shell trader, or a silk-merchant, and forget all about poor Peter Buckle, with his time-expired certificate and his broken heart."

And then I saw the tail of her white gown round the corner of the summer-house and she looked up, with a sprig of pomegranate blossom in her gold-flecked chestnut-brown hair, and said, "Ah, Sargint Buckle! Can that indade be you?" And my stern determination began to trickle away as rapidly as three-pennorth of ice at noon-day, under the beams of Miss Mack's great black eyes. Then she dropped her eyelids and pulled her skirt aside, leaving a good ten inches of seat at liberty, and the man, soldier or civilian—of course, parsons don't count—who would have seen and resisted that signalled invitation doesn't exist—or, if he does, I'm ashamed of him. I sat down.

We didn't speak for a matter of ten minutes, during which my heart kept fluttering and jumping like the pressure-indicator of an engine-boiler, and instinctively I kept glancing to make sure that the medals—Afghanistan, Egypt and Burmah—on the breast of my uniform tunic weren't jumping and fluttering too. Little tingling electric thrills kept running up and down my spine, and making their exit at the heels of my boots and the roots of my hair. But one could not go on wasting precious time after that fashion. I twisted my moustache—the ends of which I used to wax twenty years ago—and said—

"I shall think of this garden, and Mr. Mack and Mrs. Mack—and—and you—Miss Jooly, many a time when I'm at the other side of the world."

"And why would you be wasting your time in England,"

says Jooly, with a sly smile, "in thinking of a poor girl at the Antipathies?" For she had Mack's own way of shooting words on the wing, and being quite satisfied if the biggest fell to her gun.

"Wasting my time!" and I blew a heartfelt sigh. "There are two opinions to that."

"And when do you lave us, Sargint, dear?" says Jooly, in that lazy, drawling, provoking, tender, humoursome Limerick brogue that she had caught from her parents, I suppose, for at least ten of her twenty-two years had been spent in foreign latitudes.

"I'm counting it about the beginning of March," I said gruffly, for she didn't seem half sorry enough at the idea of my going away.

"The beginnin' av March," repeated Jooly, with a queer little lift of her shoulders and pursing of her lips, a tricky gesture, but becoming, like everything she did: "Och, by this and by that, Sargint, dear, we'll be getting the route together."

"What! on land, do you mean?" says I, with my heart in my throat and a wild, idiotic hope bounding up in me that she might—might——

She cast down her eyes and plucked at the fringe of an embroidered silk apron she wore.

"Mane—is it? Sure, I mane that it's going away myself I am, about the time you mintion."

"But only to Hong Kong," I said, "to stay with Mrs. Sheehan at Victoria, or the Misses Clancy, as you did last year, and——"

"Oh, Buckle," she broke out, with a quavering note in her voice that I had never heard in it before. "I'm going furdher than Hong Kong. I'm going to Australey—to Australey—to be married."

One of the notable features of Mack's garden was a miniature volcano. If the crater had suddenly manifested

itself to be in full working order, and blown up the whole shebang, together with Jooly and myself, I could not have received a greater shock. When I spoke, which I did after a short pause, my tongue rattled in my mouth like a dried tripang in a basket.

"To be married! Perhaps—" I articulated slowly, the words were so hard to speak, "perhaps as an old friend I may presume so far as to ask the name of the—happy man?"

"Sure, you know him," said she, turning her face away and twisting her pretty fingers. "It's Misther Higgson—Higgson, junior, av Bartle, Higgson & Looby's."

"The tea merchants?"

"The tay merchants. You couldn't have forgot you met him here more times than wan," said Jooly.

"*That* young chap! Ay," said I, throwing a certain expression into the words which she understood very well. "I remember him now. Rather a sickly-sallow in the face, I think, with a good many pimples," Jooly moved uneasily, "and a tinge of red in the hair—carroty would be the word."

"They call it auburn," said she.

"It's not what they call it," said I, with a cruel sneer, "it's what you call it. Now I think I can see him as plain as a mud-fish. Thin legs, hasn't he?"

"They're not developed," said Jooly, "wid marchin' in the dust, till the calves av thim are like cricket-balls," which I felt was a hit in my direction. "You see," says she, "he can afford to keep his two-wheeled thrap, like a gintleman. And I'll go bail," she went on, "his wife will rowl in her carriage—like a lady," and she tossed her head.

"And since when," says I, with a choke, "has this fine match been struck up?"

"Cornaylius mintioned the state av his affections to my father yesterday was a month," says she, biting her lips.

"Cornelius! Is that his name?" says I.

"It is," said Jooly, with red cheeks; "and I'd be glad you'd tell me, *Misther* Buckle, what you have aginst it, or him that carries it ayther."

"It's not so long ago," said I, turning round on her sharp, "that you were against him. With my own ears, Julia Mack"—and I used my biggest drill-yard voice, the one that I used to keep somewhere in the pit of my stomach for the purpose of overawing self-confident old stagers and dressing down cocky recruits—"with my own ears I heard you call him an empty-headed little *spigareethahaun*. Not that I know what that means either, but deny it if you can."

"His head may be empty," she flashed back, "but *his pockets are full*. Deny that if *you* can, Pether Buckle!"

"Oh, Jooly, Jooly!" I groaned, wounded to the quick. "My pockets may be empty, as you say, but my heart, you cruel girl—my heart's breaking with love for you, and well you know it!"

She clapped her hands together and threw her smart little apron over her head, bursting into tears as she did so.

"Lave me alone," she cried, as I tried to pull the silk away. "I am bad—I am crool, an' that's the thruth! But my fadher has his eyes to the main chance, an' 'My heavy curse an you!' says he to me, 'if you dare to dhrame av marryin' that spoony-billed turtle from the Forthress.'"—"Oh, Mack!" I thought. "And after all your expressions of regard for your dear friend Peter!"—"'that's casting his calf's eyes at you,' he says, 'an' will be axing you to be a time-expired sargint's lady some fine day when I'm off guard.'"

"True enough," I said ruefully. "I'd made up my mind to try my luck this very day. I said to myself, when I looked in on Mack this evening, 'Now or never, I'll speak!'"

"Arrah, Pether dear," sighed Jooly, dropping her glowing wet cheek on my shoulder, as my arm stole round her waist, "why didn't you spake before?"

II

Because there was no gainsaying it, my poor girl was engaged to young Higgson. The affair was settled—sawn off, hammered down, and copper-fastened, so to speak. The betrothed couple—even now my pen staggers as it writes the words—were to take passage for Sydney early in March in the teak-built, fast-sailing clipper schooner *Ringarosa*, one of the small fleet of trading vessels belonging to the firm of Bartle, Higgson & Looby. Captain Jobling, a family man of guaranteed respectability, had undertaken to guard Jooly as a daughter of his own, and the marriage would take place in Sydney from the gorgeous house of the parental Higgson. Everything was to be done upon a lavish scale, Jooly informed me. The *Ringarosa* was at that moment in dry dock, being put into apple-pie order, and two state-rooms of rather restricted dimensions had been knocked into one for the accommodation of the bride-elect, and decorated in pink and blue. And a man who has a fair comprehension of women, and can make allowances for their weaknesses—which have been fostered by men from the beginning—will easily comprehend that the pink-and-blue cabin, and the wedding *trou*—what do you call it?—that was to be bought at Sydney, and the glory and grandeur of marrying into the tea trade, went a long way towards drying the tears that would well up in Jooly's eyes, whenever carroty-headed young Mr. Cornelius Higgson, with his weak eyes and his thin legs, projected himself too prominently into her field of vision.

As for me, my furlough being ended, I went back to headquarters, not without receiving a pretty broad hint from

Mrs. Mack that the general invitation which had served to cover so many visits to Macao was now withdrawn.

It's a sore thing when the hospitable roof-tree that has covered your head on so many pleasant occasions shrivels up, as it were, and leaves you shelterless in a tropical sun; when faces that have never greeted you without a smile look coldly into yours. She'd sworn she loved me like a mother, over and over again, had Mrs. Mack, and lo, and behold! because I didn't love her daughter quite like a brother, she gave me, as she would have said herself in her Irish brogue, "the back av her hand." To this day, though, I believe they encouraged me—at the start—on purpose, and that if I'd only plucked up courage I might have had the girl for the asking, before the tea-trader turned up. A mother has no conscience where her daughter is concerned, and Mack and his wife were bent on doing the best for Jooly.

Towards Higgson I bore no more malice than if he had been a dried fish, which article of Chinese commerce he somewhat resembled. I sometimes saw him on the quays in a Panama hat and white linen suit, wearing gauze sun-goggles, which you may guess did not add to his beauty; and carrying a green umbrella. Or he was spinning along in a rickshaw, or sometimes driving a badly bred Penang pony in the two-wheeled trap which Jooly had thrown in my teeth. And so time raced on, until February was nearly out, and the *Ringarosa*, smart and dapper in her fresh coat of paint, with her scraped spars and new canvas showing snowy white against the background of blazing blue, and every brass rail and copper bolt-head about her burnished to winking-point, was towed from the quay-side to her moorings in the roadstead. A few days more and my nine years' period of service with the colours would be complete.

"Re-enlist, my good fellow," said the Colonel. "Complete your twenty-one years' service and earn your pension."

But I shook my head. "No more foreign countries for me!" I thought. The First-class Reserve and sixpence a day, with my wound-pension, and leisure to nurse my grief in some quiet village of the old home island, with a few old friends and cronies within reach, and a respectable public-house—with a skittle-ground—where we might drop in of evenings for a quiet glass, made up the sum of my ambition. And yet I was only twenty-nine and a smart fellow, who had made the most of the opportunities afforded by the regimental schoolmaster and the regimental library, and might have passed muster among officers and gentlemen—meaning officers who *are* officers and gentlemen who *are* gentlemen—if the commission I used to dream of had ever bobbed up.

The first of March had come. I was to sail in the transport *Bomba* from Hong Kong on the fourth, and a scrawl from Jooly Mack came by the post to prove that, soon as those tears dropped in the summer-house had dried, they had sprung from the right source.

"*Deer sargint Buckle,*" the composition ran—and to this day Jooly is uncertain regarding the appropriate use of capital letters, "*i Hav bene Waitin this muneTh Of sunDaise For a Lin to sho That you Hav Not Quit forgott poor Jooly Deer peter Are you gone Awai or What is it At all sure Yu wold Nott be so Kruel as to Lave without a Kiss* (scratched out) *a Kind look an a Kind Wurd to the girl that Is going Awai accross the Sais in A tay chEst to be marrid on A Man Wid tin legs*[1] *agenst her Wil.*

"*Yurse unhapily,*

"JULIA MACK."

It was plain that, in the case of Mr. Cornelius Higgson, familiarity had bred contempt.

[1] "Tin legs" meant thin legs, of course.

I must see my girl—*my* girl always in heart I felt she would be, whoever they "marrid" her "on." I must have one clasp of her dear waist—one kiss of her red lips before Fate divorced us for ever. But how? In the hope that a little malt tonic might give the necessary stimulus to the inventive faculty, I took up my cap and went out to canteen. A plump Chinaman in spectacles was sitting there, surrounded by several newly drafted men, and their eyes were round and their faces elongated with horror. I knew Hing well. He was an itinerant opium broker, retailer of small curiosities and such native luxuries as were adapted to the purse and the taste of the British soldier. He was also, as his mandarin cap testified, interpreter at one of the consulates. He was also a pleasant beast enough; an inveterate gossipmonger and teller of tales, replete for the most part with horrors, and generally true. As I drank my beer I cocked an ear in his direction. He was talking about the cholera. A man whom he knew had been smitten on the previous night with the most dreaded variety of the pest—the *tiaou-kioh-sha*, and had quitted this globe at sunrise, leaving behind upon his wooden bedstead a gnarled and twisted caricature which bore but a faint resemblance to humanity.

"Who was he, Hing?" I called out, though I didn't care a *cash*.

"He numba one cabin steward aboard a tea ship, *Lingalosa*," answered my fat friend.

"The *Ringarosa!*"" I cried, with a thrill. "Was the supercargo taken sick on board?"

Hing shook his head.

"He catchee die on a flower boat. Sailor man talkee me. Darn lucky, or ship hab go a qualantine!"

I drank my beer.

"Here's his health! They'll be looking out for somebody to take his place, no doubt."

"Capen much in a hurry want, but no hab got!" returned Hing placidly.

I set down my glass. An idea had occurred to me—a plan wild, improbable, unlikely to pass muster, but still, in the absence of any other, worth trying. I had a smattering of seamanship in case the duties of an ordinary hand should ever be required of me. I was president and caterer for our non-commissioned officers' mess. Supposing I were not to embark in the *Bomba* after all. Supposing I were to get myself shipped in the dead steward's place aboard the *Ringarosa!* What good would it do? What advantage would accrue to me from such a course? That which of all I most desired. I should see Jooly every day, hear her speak—perhaps speak to her. Without fear of recognition—for I was a stranger to Mr. Higgson—I might carry out my plan; sail in company of my dear girl to Port Jackson and then—— Nothing came after. I was going to snatch my mouthful of happiness, that was all, though I went empty of joy till the day of my death.

That evening—to tell it in the approved style of the romancer—a sampan containing a single passenger, a young man of twenty-nine summers, and of military aspect, although clad in mufti, hailed the captain of the watch on deck of the schooner *Ringarosa.*

"Tell Captain Jobling," he said in musical and vibrating accents, "that I've heard he's in want of a steward, and I've come to offer myself for the berth."

* * * * * *

III

"Your name's Sergeant, is it?" said Captain Jobling. "Very well, but let me advise you to find your sea-legs as soon as possible, my man. I can't have you playing deck-quoits with the cabin crockery. A whole pile of soup-

plates smashed up like biscuit. By the living Tinker! if it wasn't your first faut, I'd make you pay."

"The young lady screamed, sir!" I said apologetically.

"And what at I don't know, 'cept it was one of them flying cockroaches that are mostly as big as sparrows," mused the captain. "I can hear her now, 'Gracious, Peter!' with a screech that went through both my ear-drums like a red-hot awl, and then, crash! down went the plates."

"It shan't occur again, sir," said I respectfully, and I went about my new duties.

As I slipped out of the house I met her flush. She was pale, not from sickness—for she took to the sea like a stormy petrel—but from the shock of the evening before; and her beautiful black eyes had red rims round them as if she had been crying.

"Spake to me, Pether," said she imploringly, under her breath; "spake to me, an' tell me I'm not dhraming."

"Ah, Jooly!" I said, "you're awake in cruel earnest, and sixteen hours out on the voyage to Port Jackson, where the ring and the parson are waiting for you, my dear."

"Where's Cornaylius?" says she, glancing round.

"Cornelius isn't looking his best this morning," I said, with a grin. "He doesn't take to the waves as kindly as you do."

"I thought last night he looked a thrifle yellow," said she, "at the boiled leg av pork when it kem to table."

"He'd look green at it now," said I.

"But you haven't told me," she went on, "why you're here. Afther that scrap av a letther you wrote me to say good-bye I made my mind up I'd think no more av you an' your menandhering ways. But, *och!* this morn when I lifted my two eyes and saw you in your nankeen jacket, winkin' at me across the soup-plates"—a thing I had

not done—" I was sthruck spacheless, and could only scrame——"

" ' Gracious, Peter ! ' " I quoted, chuckling over the recollection.

" An' Pether it was, sure enough ! " sighed Jooly. " And now spake out and tell me what are you going to do at all at all ? "

" Convoy you safe to Port Jackson, my girl," said I.

" Ah ! but afther ? "

" See you spliced to that sea-sick baboon down there in the cabin, and then put a bullet through my head ! "

" Oh, Pether, darlin' ! "

" Or go to the devil."

" Pether, jewel ! "

" As I haven't the brass to buy the right of calling my own the only woman I ever loved——"

" Pether ! "

" But in the meantime I'll wash up the breakfast dishes and then take you for a walk up and down decks, if the captain doesn't cut in before me."

" An ould crayture wid a red nose and a swivel eye ! " She tossed her head.

I wasn't chivalrous enough to forgo a dig at my prostrate rival.

" You prefer Higgson ? Well, there's no accounting for women's tastes ! "

She swung round splendidly, with a backward flash of her eye and a sweep of her skirts. I had made her angry, but she forgave me next time we met. Life on shipboard is dull, when all's said and done, and sweethearting is the best way of killing time that has yet been invented.

And so the weeks went by. Ah ! by the time we were amongst the Carolines and Pelews, the Archipelago might well be called the " Dangerous," both for Jooly and me. And I had sworn a great oath to myself that I would yet

win her—that no man should take her from me and live; and, even as I ground my teeth, I would laugh at the limp figure of Higgson clinging to a backstay, as the *Ringarosa* dipped before the push of the trade, and trying to do the gallant to Jooly. However, as the wind freshened his courtship slackened; and when he retired below—well, it was only natural that the ship's steward should respond to an expressed desire for information on the part of the only lady passenger.

"And they're made av coral, thim islands," she would say, when the faint reflection of a distant lagoon would glimmer on the horizon, and the distant thunder of surf breaking on the outer reef would warn the helmsman of dangers unseen. "And the fishes build them?—or insex, is it? An' you don't tell me there's people livin' there, and trees growin', an' pigs and ducks, an' hins, in the middle av the say, just as there was at Macao. Arrah! tell me, now, *how did they get there in the beginnin'*, Pether, anyway?"

"It's like the puzzle of the apples in the dumpling," I said, covering a good deal of ignorance with a little facetiousness. "They're there safe enough, but how they got there is another thing."

"You're jokin' so you are, an' it's too bad av you," said Jooly, with a splendid toss of her chestnut mane. "'Tis like the consayt av the men that thinks a woman is an ignorant lump av creation, good for nothin' but kissin' an' huggin'—not that you'll dar'——"

We were well under the lee of the deck-house, and I dared. A minute later Higgson came upon us, and found me, cap in hand, respectfully endeavouring to explain as little as I knew of the science of navigation for Miss Julia Mack's enlightenment.

"This young man, Cornaylius, dear," said the arch deceiver, "is so obligin' as to show me how they get the ship along. An' so that sheet av paper with the little

black marks like flies an it is what they call a 'chart,' and when the captain puts that three-cornered brass thing to his eye he's takin' the sun. Maybe 'tis takin' so much av it makes his nose so red, an' himself so unsteady on the legs by times. Sure learning is a wondherful thing. An' now I know that sailin' a ship can be done as safe an' asy as aiting your dinner—av you only know the way, I'll not be afeared any more."

"What have you been afraid of, my dear little girl?" asked Cornelius, ogling up at her—she was some five inches his superior in height, and speaking in a patronisingly affectionate tone that made me inwardly boil over.

"I have been afeard," said Jooly, "av wan av thim little islands bein' dhropped by thim insex that builds thim —av they wor spiteful enough—right undher the ship's nose. Then where would we be, wid a hole in the plankin' big enough to dhrive a cow through, and the water pourin' in? Dhrowned an' dead," she shuddered, "every mother's son av us, wid the sharks fightin' for bites out of the tindherest places."

"But now that you know such a casualty could never occur," said Higgson, "you'll be quite easy. And you must not let Captain Jobling hear you talk in this way, as if you had no confidence in him. Why, my dear Julia, he is the most experienced commander in the tea trade, and has weathered gales strong enough to blow the——"

"Bottom out of creation," said I.

Higgson looked up at me haughtily, and then waved his hand as though making allowances for the presumption of an inferior.

"Besides, the ship is ours," he went on, "and a finer craft never sailed the Pacific; the names of Bartle, Higgson & Looby being a guarantee of superiority, my dear Julia, in whatever article or brand of merchandise to which they may be affixed."

I grinned in my sleeve, thinking what a mighty lop-sided kind of article represented the great firm on board the *Ringarosa*, while I affected to be diligently polishing the brass handrail by the cabin skylight with a cloth. It was usual for me to hover—upon some excuse of diligence—in the vicinity of the engaged couple, announcing my presence from time to time by a cough or sneeze. And every kiss I cheated Cornelius out of by this method did me nearly as much good as though I had had it myself.

"As to the chance of running on a reef," Cornelius went on, "my little girl may set her mind at rest. The firm supply their vessels with the very best and most reliable charts that can be got for money, and where reefs are not set down on that chart reefs cannot exist; it is absolutely cert——"

CRASH!

There *was* an uncharted reef, just there; and with a horrible, staggering, grinding shock the *Ringarosa* had struck on it. Her bottom was stove in, and for all Higgson's boast she had no watertight compartments, and so, after some hours of ineffectual pumping, finding the intake hopelessly in advance of the output, we took to the boats. We had not left the *Ringarosa* a quarter of a mile behind us before she went down.

Two large boats and one small ditto, and with the fortunes of the smaller one we have alone to deal. Jooly Mack, Higgson and I were in it. Nothing, I swore, should part me from sight and sound of my girl in the danger-hour, and the silent squeeze of her hand upon my arm said the same. We had a breaker of water and some tinned provisions, and a rug or two. The boat had a sail, and when the wind fell dead, Higgson and I pulled at the oars, or I took them alone, for he was a poor hand at any work other than that of the counting-house.

It had been agreed that the boats were to make head-

way for Ponapé. We saw the lights of the other two grow faint upon the darkness of the first night, and the dawn showed us nothing but a vast, heaving spread of sea, sea, sea, with crystal gleams and rosy reflections, and mid-day found us gasping, molten sapphire beneath us, as intense and burning a blue above; and the keystone of the scorching vault a sun whose rays blistered where they fell.

We had no compass, by some accursed oversight, and by the evening of the third day our water was all gone. Fortunately I knew what thirst was; my soldiering had taught me as much as that, and I had saved a portion of my ration each day to make a little store for Jooly in case of need.

It cost me sore pangs to see her dear lips parched and cracked with drought, yet I had to wait until she could endure no more before I gave her what relief I could. She was patient, unlike Higgson. For the miserable atomy whined and yelped and cursed his cruel fate, and sobbed, when the fit took him, as unreservedly as a sick baby, so that he wore himself out instead of husbanding his strength; and as he sat upon the forward thwart huddled up in an unsightly bundle, with his skinny arms upon his knees, and his lean yellow hands framing his leaner yellower face, with its glassy eyes and fallen jaw, he was a sorry spectacle.

Jooly, lying in the stern-sheets, had sunk into a stupor. It was time to give her the last chance of life, and I crawled to her with the vessel in my hand—a beef-tin we had emptied at the outset of our dreadful voyage—and held it to her lips. The gurgling of the liquid roused her; she sat up, and with a sob of gratitude and relief, stretched out her hands, and put forth her lips to drink.

She had barely swallowed a mouthful before Higgson sprang upon me, with a hoarse scream like that of a bird of prey. He grappled with me to get the tin of precious liquid, shrieking—

"Drink! Oh, let me drink! Water, only a mouthful!

I'll give you fifty pounds—a hundred—for a drop, a drop, a drop!"

"Would you rob the girl?" I said, full of scorn of him, but he fought with me so frantically that I was forced to pinion him and hold him down in the bottom of the boat until his fury had spent itself.

Something touched me. I looked round. Jooly was holding out the tin with a sweeter, gentler expression than I had ever seen upon her face before; a look that, worn and faded as her beauty was by privation and misery, made her ten times lovelier than I had ever seen her.

"Give him a dhrop, Pether," she said, "and finish it yourself, dear. I'll not buy relief at the expinse av others' pain."

I took the tin and put it to Higgson's blackened lips. He turned up his eyes in a speechless ecstasy that made him the ugliest human thing I had ever seen, and gulped the water down with such mad haste and greed that he spilt the greater portion. Only a drop or two remained when I wrenched the vessel from him.

"*She* gave it me, not you," he said, with a cunning leer, "so I don't owe you the hundred pounds." And then he settled himself down, like the dog he was, to gnaw with renewed appetite at the fragments of biscuit I had distributed that morning—the last half-ration that remained to us of food.

"Let him take it all," whispered Jooly faintly; "don't I owe him something for disaving him as I've done? For from the moment I saw your face again on board the *Ringarosa*, I knew that I could never bring myself to sthrike hands wid him before a priest. Not that I will ever sthrike hands with any man, for I'm dyin', Pether, dyin' widout a glimpse av Father Dempsey to comfort me. But oh, sure, Thim Above won't put the hard word on a poor girl for that!"

I could not speak at first for the dry choking in my throat. But—

"Be brave, Jooly, my own girl," I said; "try and live for poor Peter's sake!"

"I'll thry," she murmured, lying more heavily upon my shoulder. "But the mortal weakness is on me, Pether, dear! You won't let *him* ate me when I'm dead!"

Every drop of blood left in my parched body leapt in horror at the thought.

"For I don't like the look in his eye," Jooly went on brokenly, and Cornelius, grinding the last flinty scrap of the biscuit between his large yellow molars and looking out of the corners of his eyes to make sure that he had not overlooked a crumb, had an unpleasantly wolfish expression.

"Kiss me, Pether; he's past carin'! *Ochone!* what will my poor fadher an' mother do when they hear av this? What's that? Thunder!"

Thunder indeed: the deep, long-drawn, incessant clamour of surf beating on a reef. The sail had obscured my view until now, but a puff of wind—blessed wind!—bellied and lifted it. And in the purple, glowing distance, strung upon the sea-line like an amethyst upon a silver thread, a palm-plumed islet lifted into view.

And that was our first sight of Ruatava.

IV

We scraped safely through the narrow jaws of the tide-pass into the lagoon. The flood caught us and carried us, while we sat helplessly and sobbed, without tears.

Our isle of deliverance was an oval-shaped, low-lying atoll, rich in vegetation. Peopled, too, for the lime-smeared huts of a native settlement shone between the palm-trunks of the farther shore. When our boat's prow

grated on the yellow beach, and I dropped the oar with which I had been feebly sculling, and held out my hand to help Jooly ashore, the brown, oil-smeared, clamorous men and women thronged about us. I had picked up a fair smattering of the Fijian dialect from some native sailors with whom I had been acquainted at Hong Kong, but little use I could make of it here. They did what Christians don't always do—they saw our necessity and relieved us with prompt good-will. Ah! I shiver to think what our fate would have been if they had merely referred us to a Ratack Chain Board of Guardians. They had seen white men before—I gathered that from the sticks of tobacco in the ears of the chief men, and from one of their number, an English-speaking Gilbert Islander (a Tafito man), who had been left there eighteen months back by the first ship that had ever touched there—but never a white woman. And they could not make enough of Jooly, and loaded her with presents of roast sucking-pigs and baked fish, yams, and taro, gourds-full of Kava beer, and *tappa* cloth enough to drape a dozen women—after the South Sea style.

"Sure," said Jooly, "they thrate me like a queen."

We sat in the cool shade under a spreading breadfruit tree, a week from our arrival. She wore a wreath of crimson hibiscus flowers twisted amongst her chestnut coils, and a gown made out of a piece of fine yellow grass-cloth, nearly as gauzy and transparent as India muslin. I never saw the queen—and I had had a glimpse of one or two—that came within a mile of her, for looks.

"Art thou not a queen," asked Taho, the Gilbert man, who had just brought her some green cocoanuts, "in the land of the *papalagi?*"

"She's a chief's daughter, safe enough," I said, anxious not to spoil the excellent impression that Miss Mack's charms had made. "Her father is head-man upon the island of Macao, many miles to the eastward. The *ariki*

vahas—captains of ships that pass—pay him tribute upon their goods, and knock heads before him, and those that rebel are chased by his war-canoes and sunk in deep waters. He is a great man, and tins of salmon are as common as bananas in his house. Moreover"—I found a Biblical style of language more readily comprehensible by Taho, who had acquired his English from a drunken Methodist missionary and a copy of the Old Testament—"moreover, he drinks strong waters and smokes twist tobacco from morning till night."

"And thou art *nofo noa* (unwedded)?" asked Taho of Jooly.

"I am," said she, with a glint of her eye at me, "at present."

"*To fa*," said Taho, getting up to go. "I will bear the news to our head ones. They thought that one or both of thy companions—the big, tall man here, who can crush a ripe cocoanut in his fist, and whom thou callest Peti, or the little dried-up one—might be husband to thee; but since it is not so, there will be rejoicings and much Kava chewed and drunk." And he walked away.

"The impidence av these haythens!" pouted Jooly. But I was uneasy—I could not have told why.

Taho came to my hut next day to ask me to join a tripang-fishing expedition to the reefs at the northern end of the island.

"The white woman and the little white man—Igson, as you call him—have gone to gather *pandanas* with my wife and my wife's brother. Dost thou doubt?" He gave me a scrap of paper—the back of an old envelope—upon which Jooly had scrawled a few words in pencil—

"*Deer peter i am All rite don't u be distresin yurself About*

"*Yurse Jooly.*"

So I went after the tripang with Taho. The sun was dipping behind the westward sea-line as we returned, and I thought I had never seen a more threatening sky. There was not a breath of wind to stir the foliage. The chatter of the birds was stilled, and the only sound that broke the silence besides the soft shuffle of our own naked footsteps in the loose coral sand, and the lap of ripples on the beach, was the continuous beating of a drum.

We drew near the settlement. The lime-washed huts of Ruatava were reddened with the sunset. Upon an eminence to the south-west, under a clump of palms, stood a temple, built of roughly hewn slabs of coral rock, and towards this, from every quarter of the town, trickled streams of brown humanity, painted and adorned as for a gala, and smelling strongly of rancid cocoanut oil. All the while the drum beat like a troubled heart, and a ring of men, some twenty deep, had gathered round the rising knoll where the white roof of the temple glittered in the shadow of the trees.

"What's up?" I asked of Taho, and he, answering my look and gesture as much as the uttered question, said lightly—

"It is the marriage of our god, Majuru. *Tah!* He hath sought a wife for long, and now he finds her. Therefore the drum beats in the temple, and the men are blackened with bone-charcoal as for a great feast or a battle, and the women are dressed with garlands and strings of shell."

"But is your god a live one?" I asked.

"Majuru is of wood," said Taho, "covered with finely braided sinnet, dyed of a beautiful red. His teeth are of the shark, and his eyes are shell, and his stomach is hollow, and forth from it the priests draw blessings or curses, just as Majuru happens to be angry or pleased."

"I see," said I; "and so you are going to marry your

wooden god to a wooden goddess! We'll drink their healths in toddy to-night."

Taho showed his sharp, filed teeth in an agreeable grin, and we hurried on with our bags of slimy *bèche-de-mer*. I was anxious to see Jooly returned safe with my own eyes, for much I doubted the prudence of having let her stray beyond my sight in native company. Higgson, I knew, was with her, but such a white-livered cur didn't count. And as his name came into my mind I stumbled on the man himself, squatting stupidly on the ground at the foot of a tree not ten yards away.

"Where is Miss Mack?" I shouted, dropping my bag of trepang and striding towards him. All sorts of fears leapt up in me. I thought of a thousand things that might have happened to her—in a breath. And my heart seemed to wither in me as I saw that Higgson was pinioned, that his arms had been drawn backwards round the tree, and fastened together at the wrists with twisted cocoanut fibre, that his ankles were bound, and that he was gagged with a wooden peg.

I whipped out my knife, and would have freed him in another twinkling, but there came a padding rush of bare feet upon the sand, and twenty stalwart islanders were on me in an instant. I fought like a madman, but the odds were too heavy, and before long I found myself in a situation counterparting Higgson's, hugging a neighbouring tree in the same ridiculous way, and champing on a peg with impotent fury. I knew now that the excursion of the morning had been planned to get me out of the way, that Taho was a traitor, that Jooly was in the hands of the chiefs of Ruatava, and that I was helpless—incapable of speech or movement—and that the mad throbbing of my pulses was mingling with that incessant beating of the drum.

Before me, without any intervening trees or houses to

spoil the view, rose the temple knoll. Round it a vast ring of natives had mustered twenty deep. Outside the male ring was another, less staid in demeanour and less regular in shape, composed of women and children. And the drum kept on beating till it nearly drove me mad. But suddenly it stopped and the silence was awful.

Then the crowd said *Tah!* as if a giant had spoken under his breath, and before the air had ceased vibrating the doors of the temple opened, and a great grinning wooden idol was carried out, sitting on a kind of portable throne upheld on the shoulders of several bewigged and grotesquely painted savages—priests, I suppose. Up the knoll at the same time moved a small procession, mostly of women, clad only in the *lava-lava*, or waistcloth of woven grass, but wearing wreaths of white and crimson and yellow flowers in their shining hair, and garlands round their necks and wrists and ankles. And several priests as savage-looking as the first carried a bamboo palanquin—a cage it was more like—through the wicker-work of which I could see a glimmer of white.

They pushed on until they were within a few steps of the idol. Then they halted.

A priest pushed back the curtain of the litter and made a sign of command.

Then a woman stepped out—a woman whose silken locks flowed over her shoulders and cascaded nearly to her knees, and whose rounded, graceful figure was swathed in diaphanous folds of white from the ankles to the waist. And she climbed the few steps that remained, and fell face downwards at the feet of Majuru.

"*Tah!*" the crowd said again, as if with one mouth. A wave of blood swamped my brain; the scene spun away from before my eyes in shifting lines of colour. I groaned in my throat; the muscles of my neck strained to cracking; the cord securing the gag snapped, and I spat it

violently forth. Vision came back to me. But the woman in white no longer lay face downwards on the ground; she sat aloft, upborne on the shoulders of the priests, on a level with the knees of Majuru; and as the drum recommenced its devilish tattoo, the group moved backwards towards the open doors of the temple. Then all at once my tongue was loosed.

"Jooly!" I shrieked. "Jooly!"

But the doors of the temple shut, and the assembled population of Ruatava grunted and dispersed, to the measured beating of Majuru's drum. Then Taho with some others came and unbound myself and Higgson, and with significant gestures illustrative of the fate that would befall us did we approach Majuru's temple, permitted us to go free.

V

"You pitiful cur!" I said, bringing my face to a level with Higgson's, so that he might have the full benefit of its expression, into which I tried to infuse the whole of the contempt I felt. "You let those savages kidnap her—the girl you were to marry—and never struck a blow in her defence. Ay, you stand there without a scratch on you, alive, you dog, when by rights you should be dead, or scored with bleeding wounds."

"I think it right to tell you, steward," said Higgson, trembling very much, but trying to keep his elbows straight and his shoulders down from his ears, "that I object very much to your tone! I consider you a very rude person indeed, and I strongly dispute your right to interfere. And I may tell you that if ever I see Captain Jobling again, I shall express my feeling very strongly—very strongly indeed—with regard to his engagement of a subordinate at once so unpleasantly familiar and so objectionably officious as you have shown yourself to be."

"You can tell him all that when you see him," I said. "Meanwhile, we're amongst savages, on a little-known island of the Pacific, and, for all I know, in peril of our lives. And Miss Mack—Heaven only knows what is happening to her while I speak!" And a shudder shook me from head to foot. "If ever there was a moment for action," I went on, "this is it; and the chance to retrieve your character in my eyes" (he sneered) "and the eyes of every honest man. She's in that temple, locked up with this wooden god they've married her to. And we have got to get her out of there!"

He smiled a yellow, waspish kind of smile.

"By all means get her out," says he, "if you can!"

"Do you mean that you won't put forth your hand to help her?" I said sternly, "and she in danger of deadly harm?"

"I mean," says he, "that all the harm that can happen to her has happened by this time," and my blood boiled in my veins at his tone. "I don't believe they mean to murder her; but they *have* given us to understand that if you or I meddle in this business, it means death—and death by torture, to me or you, or both of us."

"I'm ready to risk that," said I. And then I said, speaking plain but low, and looking at him steadily, "I'll tell you something if you'd been half a man you'd 'a' guessed before. I love the woman that's to be your wife, and, what's more, she loves me; and I have her solemn oath," said I, "that no man's wife shall she be but mine. And I had it on my conscience till this minute that we'd played you an underhanded, mean kind of trick; but"—I flung out my hand as though I threw something in his face, and his eyelids blinked with the fear of a blow—"from this hour we may go clear in conscience."

"You may go to the devil," pipes he, sick and green with hate and fury; "you and she together! I'm well

quit of her. You were over-thick on the ship; you've been over-thick on this island, and *now*"—and he snapped his fingers jeeringly in the direction of the temple—"and *now*, it's likely I'd marry——"

I struck him with my open hand—he was so weakly a creature—a ringing slap on either cheek, that left the livid prints of my fingers there, like cicatrices of old tattooing. Then I turned on my heel and left him, as he frothed and shrieked out curses after me. I had added another enemy to the crowd in Higgson, I knew, and that his hate would be more dangerous than theirs by as much as the poison of the cobra surpasses in its deadly quality the venom of other serpents I felt certain. Oh! but I was heavy at heart. Not when my girl told me the news of her engagement to the tea trader; not when we floated in our little boat, compassless, upon the unknown ocean, famished and burning with thirst under the pitiless blue sky, had I known a moment of such leaden despair. It was still daylight; the swift, sudden passage from twilight to darkness, which is so marked in the tropics, had yet to occur. For the darkness I thirsted; I had made up my mind to scrape acquaintance with Majuru upon his wedding night, and there was likelihood that a morrow might never dawn for me.

In the revolver pocket of my serge trousers was the only weapon I possessed—a carpenter's chisel of large size which I had found, rusty and forgotten, in the locker of the boat. It was sharp enough now—I had ground it to an edge between two pieces of coral—and a man might have had a worse weapon at his need.

Thinking this, I pulled it out and felt its sharpness with my thumb, as I stood upon a spur of firm sand that ran out upon the beach of wave-rolled pebbles. I looked out over the lagoon; the waters heaved with a little swell, and shone iridescent like melted opal. Behind the trees of the

opposite shore the sun was glowing like a fu e. A canoe shot from the line of bluish shadow that d the beach, and darted swiftly towards me. Neare came, and nearer. I recognised the treacherous Gilbe ander in the man who wielded the paddle. The feel of the sharp steel was pleasant to my hand at tha ment. Amongst the blows that I meant to deal be died there should be one, I thought, for Taho—one hould not need repeating.

The canoe kept on its course, but with odd flu ations and waverings from the straight line. Every moment the paddler glanced athwart his shoulder, then bent to his labour afresh. The cause of his hurry appeared in the wake of the canoe—the triangular dorsal fin of a shark, a great grey monster, which in hunger or for mere devilment was closely following. Now the fin disappeared, the white belly gleamed, the wolfish teeth and ravening mass appalled the fugitive. Luck favoured him so far. He was within a cable's length of the beach, though still in deep water, when with a bubbling rush alongside the paddle was torn from his hands, and the cranky canoe capsized instantly.

I cannot now imagine what urged me to the folly of risking my life for that treacherous savage when a stake so infinitely greater was to be played for. But I ran forward, shouting, and plunged in. Shoeless as I was, and clad only in the remains of a cotton shirt and a ragged pair of trousers, there was nothing to impede my progress; with my poor weapon in my hand, to where the wallowing of the great fish and the struggles of his intended victim created a bubbling vortex amidst the peaceful waters, I swam as though for life.

And then a brown arm rose above the surface of the water within a few feet of me. The hand grasped a splintered paddle. I caught the wild roll of savage, terror-stricken eyes before Taho dived. Then the sandpaper hide

of the shark skinned my leg; I drew it up instinctively . . . there was a wallowing roll alongside, and I saw the yellow-white belly out of the corner of my eye. Then I struck—at random; but the blow met with resistance, and the foam upon the water had instantly the tinge and the taste of blood.

Treading water, I waited for the renewal of the attack, but none came. The shark had had enough; the arrival of an armed adversary on the scene had put him off his cruel game of cat-and-mouse. He was gone, and the black head of the Gilbert Islander was visible, nearing the shore. He had not waited for me; there was no gratitude under that tattooed skin of his, I thought. But he lingered on the beach until I set my feet to the bottom, and his hand was stretched forth to help me ashore.

"*Ei!* but thou art a man!" he croaked, as I wrung the water out of my scant garments, and he patted my arm with his tattooed hand, but I thrust it away.

"Off with you!" I said. "Don't thank me, for I'm sorry I did it, you black-hearted Micronesian pirate."

"*Tah!*" he said, "sorry or not sorry, the thing is done. Hadst thou not come, this had been a *po malaia*" (a night of evil luck) for me. "When the devil crunched the *foi*" (paddle) "my stomach dried up with fear. But thou camest, and the shark goes supperless, but *thou* shalt not want aught that I can give thee," and he struck his left palm downwards sharply with his right fist, a gesture which I knew amongst the islanders signified an oath. "Ay," he went on, looking hard at me, "if I have to rob the Lord of the Temple himself!"

And with that he went away.

I waited, then, until upon the brooding palm-groves, and the long stretches of shining beach, and upon the calm bosom of the lagoon, darkness fell.

Still I waited, until the cocoanut oil lamps began to

twinkle in the houses, showing that the islanders were gathered beneath their roof trees over the evening meal of baked fish and bananas. Then, moving noiselessly under the black velvet canopy of night, studded with trembling star-points, I set out for the temple on the hill.

VI

I had a clear hour before me ere the moon should rise. Therefore I could afford to be cautious, and, with the south-west breeze puffing in my face, struck out through the woods upon a line which should bring me to a point, as near as I could determine, from which, facing about and heading due north, I should cross the island cemetery—a spot avoided by the superstitious natives after dusk—and strike the roots of the rising knoll upon which, with its sculptured doorway facing towards the lagoon, the temple stood.

Loosely piled blocks of coral made a low wall about the burying-place. Gleams of starlight guided me as I threaded my way amongst the tombs—miniature temples, guarded by grotesque and grinning images wrought in lava, and representing the upper half of the human body based upon a shapeless block. Mine is not an imaginative nature, but if those stone mouths had shrieked an alarm, those sightless eyes rolled on me in threatening, I should have been more frightened than surprised. The sweat rolled off me in chilly beads, and I could hear in the silence the thumping of my heart.

I paused at the roots of the knoll where the temple stood, and looked cautiously about. There was no sign of any watcher, no soft, barefooted steps of a savage patrol, no rattle of weapons of wood or stone, to betray the guard's alertness. All was still and dark.

I climbed the knoll, scarce breathing; I skirted the walls

of the temple, and drew near the door. Its outline was drawn in streaks of yellow light. A lamp or torch must be burning within. Noiselessly I drew near. A chink in the roughly hewn planks of *pandanus*-wood invited, and to it I clapped my eye.

The place was illuminated by the fitful glimmer of a pith wick, which burned in a helmet-shell, full, presumably, of cocoanut oil, suspended by grass-cords from the centre of the roof, which was supported by four wooden pillars, wound about their bases with finely plaited sinnet stained brilliant red. Tufts of red feathers taken from the tail of a tropic bird peculiar to the Pacific islands decorated the upper ends, and bunches of the same dangled from the rafters and fluttered in the upper draught.

And, upon a block of red *tufa* shaped like a throne, squatted the hideous image of Majuru, feather-crowned and decked with shells, and with sharks' teeth in the grinning jaws of it. In the middle of its forehead was set a square tablet of blue coral, with strange characters engraved on it, and the expression of the insentient countenance was so hideous, a mixture of such fell malevolence and despair, that I turned my glance away with something like a chill of fear coursing down my backbone. And I saw that a woman—*the* woman I sought—lay sleeping on a mat at the foot of the throne. I knew the face, the hair—unbound from its knot and streaming over her shoulders—every rich curve of the sumptuous form was familiar to me, and yet I was sensible of a strangeness. There was something savage in the panther-like attitude of repose, something in the fold of the brows and the curve of the mouth I had not noticed before. It was, and yet was not, my Jooly. I may have leant upon the door so that it creaked under my weight, or uttered an exclamation, unknowingly. For she awoke, and gathered up her limbs and sat with wide eyes and dilated nostrils, listening. The

light fell full upon her face, and on an engraved tablet of blue coral similar to that the idol wore, which was secured upon her forehead by a woven band of silvery grass. About her white throat gleamed a necklace of pearls, of such perfect shape and moon-like lustre as I had never seen before, and her only garment was white *tappa*, the silky, semi-transparent manufacture of the island. She sat another moment, seeming to sniff the air like some wild creature for the taint of a stranger's presence, before she rose. Her name was upon my lips when they were stiffened into silence. For I saw her fall upon her knees before the ugly image and press her white forehead to the ground as she, the Christian girl, had bent herself before the Altar of the Blessed Sacrament in the Catholic church at Macao! And then she let down the roof-lamp by its cord, and trimmed the wick with a scallop-shell, as I had seen the island women do; while every pulse in my body and every drop in my veins seemed to wait upon the wonder.

I was sane; no fever disturbed my senses. I was broad awake, and yet how difficult it was to believe that the scene I looked on was not a dream! How much more so when I saw Jooly take a shell of scented oil—I could smell its perfume where I stood—and anoint that accursed idol. At her loathsome labour she sang, and, God help me! in the island tongue, with not three words of which I had known her to be acquainted. And then from a corner she brought bananas and baked fish in a plaited dish, and kava in an earthen vessel, and ate and drank, after first offering food to the painted monster on the throne.

Something seemed to crack between my temples then. I don't know what I did. I thrust in the door, which was only fastened by a wooden bolt, and stood before her, crying upon her name, and begging her, in the name of

Him who made us, to cease that wicked mummery and fly with me. Ay! I was like a man possessed, and small wonder.

And then, as if I had not endured as much as man is capable of enduring, my brimming cup of horror was made to overflow. For Jooly thrust out both palms before her forehead, violently, with a savage gesture that conveyed an imperious command to begone, and shrieked at me hissingly, vindictively, hatefully, in the dialect of the island, as nearly as I could comprehend—

"Away! away! O *puakaka te matan!* Vile white man! A *po malaia*—a night of evil luck it is that brings thee here! Back! back from the threshold of the Lord of the Island, Majuru the holy, the untouched! Curses on thee! Away!"

And as she thrust me from her, with glaring eyes of horror and lips that foamed with horror at me, her lover, drawn back from teeth that gleamed as if ready to bite, I turned and ran.

Ran for my life, I don't know how far or how long, or in what direction, until a low-hanging branch of some tree struck me violently on the forehead, the moon and the stars seemed to rush together and blind me with one glare of whiteness, and I reeled and fell—over the edge of a precipice it seemed—into the darkness and the silence of the tomb.

VII

I awakened to weakness and pain, and, worse than all, the sickness of doubt, the bitterness of despair. I struggled, in that waking moment, to a sitting posture and caught Taho by his tattooed wrist. I lay on a pile of mats in the Tafito's hut. I don't know how he found me, or conveyed me there, but there I was when I opened my eyes.

"Thou art better, *Tah!* but it was a blow. But that

thy skull is thick like mine, and not a mere rind such as covers the brains of other *papalagi*, thou wouldst be dead See now what comes of going alone by night to the temple on the hill."

The Tafito laid me back upon the grass mats like a child, and laid some wet leaves on my burning head, for the wound on my temple pained me sorely.

"Where is she—my Jooly? Where have you brown devils hid her? If you've a heart in your body, man, you'll answer and say," I groaned.

Taho waved his hand towards his lips, and then in the direction of the temple on the hill. From the hut door it was plain to see, with its shining walls of roughly hewn coral. A bunch of red feathers hung from a pole stuck in the ground before the door.

"She is there!"

"Do you think I'm fooled so easily? I tell you the girl, the woman in the temple that I saw and spoke with—heard speak, rather—was a native. Not my girl that you've stolen from me. The hair was hers, and the eyes—like enough to dazzle a man with fever in his blood. But she hadn't a word of English to her tongue. And she shrieked at me and cursed me. You'd have thought the sight of me was poison!"

"It is poison," said the Tafito, "to Majuru. He hates the *papalagi*."

"Well, but Majuru held his tongue. It was Joo—the woman, who did the screaming."

"Because he bade her. Is she not his? Have the priests not bound the *miti* on her forehead? The blue shining stone that is wife to the one Majuru wears. And while she carries it she will serve Majuru, and tend him, and do his bidding, and speak no tongue but his—ay, though she were thrice a woman of Beretania." [1]

[1] England.

I released him and he turned to go.

"In six days, remember, when the ship is here, and—it may be they will seek to catch and hide thee from the eyes of the *Kapeni*—so be wary, *papalagi*, and wise. Above all, seek not to approach the white girl until the hour is ripe. Evil will come of it if thou dost, I warn thee. I have a watch set upon the highest point in the island, a *tama* whom I can trust. And when the boy gives the signal, then we must run and hide. One of the tombs of the *marae* shall be our cavern, where none will dare to come because of the *tabu*, but where I will go with thee, because thou art brave. Then under cover of night we will steal the girl and take my canoe and paddle out—ay, beyond the lagoon gates where the schools of sharks lie in wait. And we will gain the ship, and all will be well. So rest and sleep, eat, and grow strong for six days longer!"

How slowly they crept by, those six days of waiting!

I wakened once from an uneasy noon sleep, and heard the sound of the great drum beating from the temple on the hill, and looked out from a chink and saw a procession going by. Painted priests with feather standards, and others with clubs and spears, and others blowing conch-shells and wooden flutes, to a barbaric kind of march, and in their midst, walking amidst the priestesses, and dressed in green leaves like them, Majuru's queen. The crowd surged and eddied, and pressed close to look at her, and in it I caught a glimpse of the yellow-white face of Higgson, but she never looked at them or at him. Her eyes were fixed upon the distant temple on the hill; she seemed drawn to it by an invisible chain. My heart stopped beating as I looked at her; my eyes were strained to bursting in the effort to make sure.

Yes! It must be my girl—it *was*—for all her strange disguise of inward as well as outward vestiture, and I

swore a great oath that mine should be the hand to tear the heathen mask from that Christian soul. And she went past, and the leaden-footed hours crawled by until the signal waved from the palm-tree on the highest point that told us our deliverance was in sight.

VIII

When darkness fell we left the village. The ship was some twelve miles away; unless a southerly cat's-paw should take her away to leeward she would enter the lagoon of Ruatava at dawn. Hidden amongst the tombs of the burying-place we lay, watching the temple, watching the lights in Ruatava kindle one by one, and waiting the moment to advance.

It came, and we glided out from amongst the tombs as silently as ghosts are supposed to move. As I stepped over the low wall of the *marae* a man passed me, a mere shadow in the thick darkness, unillumined by any light of moon or stars, for a sea-fog had rolled in from the ocean and wrapped the island in a misty veil. I stopped short, for Taho's grasp was on my arm.

"Didst thou see?" he whispered.

"Who was it?"

"The other *papalagi*. I saw his white face shine for a moment against the darkness—and then he was gone."

"You're sure?"

"*Tah!* Who other should I take him for? Art thou not here?"

We went on swiftly but cautiously, and climbed the hill, running with our bodies bent, keeping the temple between us and Ruatava. As we reached the door we saw that a light burned behind it as of old, and a glimpse through the chink convinced me that *she* was there. As I set my shoulder to the planks and burst the wooden

fastenings, I heard her cry out in the island tongue, and at the same moment rapid footsteps went scudding down the hill. There was not a minute to lose. The spy, white or brown, had gone to alarm the town; the whole swarm of islanders would be about our ears in another instant.

There were two women in the temple—the one we sought, and another, an old and hideous hag with a fantastic mop of dyed red hair. They had been at work by the light of the oil-lamp, sewing red feathers on strips of bark, probably for the adornment of Majuru. As we rushed in, and I caught Jooly in my arms, the old creature, with a fierce yell, leapt at me, and the sharp point of some weapon—a stone knife, I suppose—pierced my shirt and wounded me slightly in the side. Taho tore the wild-cat from off me in an instant, and gagged and bound her with strips of her own cloth, while I struggled with Jooly.

Heaven help us! she fought like a woman possessed. With glaring eyes and heaving bosom, she strove at first in silence; then, finding herself over-mastered, she burst forth with shriek on shriek.

"Quick! quick! Tear the *miti* from her forehead," Taho yelled in my ear.

I freed one hand and seized the band. It slipped from her head easily enough, but *the blue tablet never stirred; it was fixed to her forehead as firmly as though it had grown there!*

"Tear it away!" Taho yelled again, and I wound the band about my wrist and put out all my force, and with a sickening thrill of horror wrenched off the accursed thing, the skin tearing as it came, and heard her scream in agony, and felt her drop a dead weight on my arm. In another moment the fresh night air blew on our faces, as the Tafito and I, carrying the helpless burden between us, hurried down the hill. Even as we reached its base, the blaring shriek of a conch broke from the temple—

where the old woman must have rid herself of her bonds by dint of claws and teeth—to be answered by others from distant Ruatava. And across the space that intervened between the temple and the town came flying streaks and lines of fire, torches borne by swift runners who yelled as they ran. Two leapt upon us as we turned the corner of the cemetery, but Taho swung about his head a ponderous club he had taken from the temple, and I heard their skulls crack like egg-shells, one after another. And then we were amongst the woods and heading for the beach. The pursuit had missed us—the chief anxiety being for the safety of Majuru, the men of Ruatava had sought the temple first of all. But in the distance behind us thudded the footsteps of a solitary runner, and, impeded as we were by our burden, he gained upon us surely. Then I took Jooly upon my shoulders and ran, handicapped by all I held dearest, as I had never run before.

The moon was up now, or there would have been sore danger to her or to me, or both of us, in running thus between the columns of the trees. As it was, when the white dazzle of the beach broke upon my sight, I thanked God. The breathing of that runner in the background mingled with our own hoarse pants. In another minute he would emerge into the open.

"This way, *papalagi*. Here is the canoe!" Taho whispered hurriedly as the cry of a bird rose chirpingly from the edge of the lagoon. There indeed was the canoe, a craft of fair size, moored and swaying to the ripple, with the dark shadow of a native lad seated in her. He splashed over the side like a duck on seeing us. I lifted Jooly in and laid her on the bottom, and took the boy's place. Thanks to my fishing excursions with Taho I could use a paddle well enough.

"Hurry, O hurry!" said the Tafito, as he shoved off, and, grasping his paddle, began—imitated by myself as

well as I was able—to urge the craft forward with short, powerful strokes. We were not a painter's length distant from the beach when our pursuer broke from the edges of the wood and ran down to the water's edge. It was Higgson, sure enough.

"Come on, you d——d fools!" he shrieked, waving his arms in urgent appeal, and a confused clamour of native voices responded from the wood. "Don't you see they're escaping? He's got the girl, there, in the canoe!"

"Paddle, O paddle!" said Taho, looking round. And as the canoe shot forward, strangely enough, as though sent by Heaven to guide us, a dull detonation sounded from far out at sea, and across the tops of the trees that fringed the intervening barrier of reef leapt the blue flare of a ship's rocket.

And at that Higgson's mood changed. Here, now, was a dilemma for the traitor. In currying favour with the savages he had lost his opportunity, it might be, of sharing our chance of freedom. He stretched out his arms towards the canoe, and shrieked to us to stop, for Heaven's sake, and take him with us; and as we continued to forge ahead, he deliberately waded in and began to swim after us.

"Paddle, paddle!" said Taho; "the sharks will soon stop him. There are too many here for swimming, as thou knowest, and therefore the men of Ruatava have gone for the canoes."

But my heart failed me. Once before, in the boat at sea, I had pitied Higgson, to my cost. I pitied him now, as he strained after us, his white face a mere speck of pale shadow on the water.

"Stop!" I said.

"Thou art a madman!" growled Taho. "He will upset us, and the sharks will have us all."

But I waited until the swimmer reached us, and put forth my hand as he bubblingly cried for mercy; and as

Taho threw all his weight upon the opposite gunwale, I caught him by the hair and lifted him into the canoe. And we paddled on as he lay dripping and gulping beside the insensible girl, and shouts in the distance—shouts that came nearer—told that the canoes of Ruatava were in pursuit.

"Steady now," said Taho, as the jaws of the reef yawned before us. "Those who follow will not follow through *here*."

Luckily for that dangerous passage it was the hour of the ebb. We weathered it in a swirl of rushing waters, and, drenched through and blinded with spray, found ourselves upon the open sea. A westerly wind had risen; the combing waves threatened our cranky craft—already in sore need of baling—with destruction each minute.

"Sit up, man, and bale!" I said, thrusting into Higgson's hands the vessel used for the purpose.

He obeyed, but we made little way. The most we could do was to keep afloat. And so we toiled until the first faint glimmer of day broke and showed us, against the sea-line to the north-west, a brigantine close-reefed.

"A South American trader," said Higgson, scanning her under his levelled hand.

"The *Kapena* who left me yonder," said Taho, with a wave of his hand towards Ruatava, now distant some three miles. "It is his ship."

"We're overladen," said Higgson savagely, "and there's a westerly gale getting up. She'll be driven miles beyond our reach if we can't lighten the canoe."

I glanced at *her*. Her swoon had passed into sleep—a sleep so deep that it seemed unnatural. Her pale face was stained with blood that had trickled from a wound where the skin had been torn away—I knew how—from her forehead. But she breathed calmly as a child.

"The only way of lightening the canoe that I can see,"

I said, " is for you to get out. You're at liberty to do so, you know."

He gnashed his teeth at me in rage, but said no word; and just then the water whitened with the first puff of the squall, and in less time than it takes to write the words we were enveloped in driving spray. I could not see or hear. I paddled on with clenched teeth, hoping against despair that we might run through. And in the moment when the canoe was carried forward by the onrush of a wave, I felt her lurch and bound beneath us, and then—we were carried on, with the echo of a shriek ringing in our ears; but the cranky craft rode more lightly and shipped less water, and the westward sky was clearing; and as I cleared my smarting eyes from the stinging brine, I realised that Taho was gone—that in his place sat Higgson wielding the spare paddle, and that in the livid glance the tea trader cast at me over his ragged shoulder there was something more sickly than horror and more ghastly than surprise. But at that moment every fibre of me thrilled to the sound of a voice I knew—

" Pether, dear! Pether! Is that yourself, and where are we at all? "

An hour later we stood upon the deck of the Peruvian brigantine *Avala*.

I knew something of Spanish, and Higgson spoke it fluently. I knelt upon the deck beside my dear girl, and looked into the dark eyes that shone back recognition, and thanked Heaven for our deliverance. But when she was taken below by the kindly surgeon of the vessel, I stepped forward and touched Higgson on the arm.

" I have no means of proving it," I said to him, " but, as I stand here, I believe you to be a murderer. If you are not, why is there blood upon your sleeve? "

" My own! " he cried, gnashing his teeth.

"There's not a scratch on you," I said.

"Make your story good," he sneered, "if you can. I've told the captain there's war amongst the natives, and he's decided not to touch at Ruatava."

I turned upon my heel and walked aft. From that day neither I nor Jooly spoke one word to Higgson, and from the time when we landed at Lisbon until this we have never set eyes upon the tea dealer.

"*Caramba!*" said the civil little captain, when, in thanking him at parting for our deliverance, I essayed to press upon him part of the scanty sum I carried under my rags in my canvas money-belt. "Of your money I will not take a *centavo*. A salute from the beautiful lips of the senhorita, perhaps——"

"I'm not so poor that I can't spare him wan. Sure there'll be plenty left, Pether, darling," said Jooly.

"It hardly seems to me like poverty—with the senhorita's pardon!" said Captain Garcias, when this speech had been translated, and Jooly had paid our united passages in the stipulated coin, and taken a receipt, rather perfumed with garlic, by the way. "The senhorita might pass for an heiress, with a million *pesos* worth of pearls upon her bosom."

The kindly little man had opened our eyes. True enough, there were the pearls—Majuru's marriage settlement upon the queen of his shark-toothed majesty's choice. There were a hundred of them, large and small, the majority being of enormous size and perfect orientation. Pierced as they were, they ultimately sold for more than double the estimate of the Portuguese trader. Whether Mack paid over her dower or not, my Jooly *was* an heiress.

Many a time since my girl and I have been married I have looked back to our strange adventures upon the isle of Ruatava. Perhaps the strangest thing of all is that my wife has no recollection of anything that happened,

from the moment when the blue coral tablet was bound upon her forehead—which still bears the mark of its forcible removal—to the moment when, waking, she found herself in the canoe.

As somebody says in Shakespeare, there are queerer things in heaven and upon earth than learned folks think possible—especially among the islands of the Pacific.

THE MORTALITY OF THE DIVINE EMILIE

I

The year of especial grace, 1794. October had come in royally, with fresh largesses of gold for the crisping oak woods and rich mantles of imperial purple and crimson for the vineyards and the orchards of fruitful Lorraine. M. de Voltaire—that high-blazing comet of the social and intellectual heavens, being—in company with another celestial body of scarcely inferior lustre—upon a flying visit to titular Polish majesty at its castle of Lunéville, M. de Voltaire, looking from one of the windows of his suite of apartments over the green terraces, with their fountains, peacocks and formal multicoloured flower-beds, beyond the smiling stretches of champaign to the amethyst-hued, cloud-capped ranges in the north-east, M. de Voltaire found it quite Arcadian. "The nuptials of Pomona and Vertumnus," said Monsieur, "might be fitly represented in ballet-action, with such a *mise-en-scène*." Thenceafter, Monsieur, not being over partial, except in theory, to fresh air and sunshine, bade one of his two valets close the window, pull down the silken blinds and clap to the stout shutters, barring out the strong, hot yellow light which made fair to extinguish the wax tapers, and sat down at one of his three or four writing tables—a glutton, Monsieur, in the matter of such conveniences—in an inspired mood and a splendid *casaquin* of flowered brocade, to dash off a little poetical pastoral for the delectation of majesty. Only titular Polish majesty, to be sure; ignoble, dissipated, dawdling, mentally without backbone, but the

pink of politeness and the mirror of manners. Really capable, besides, of appreciating true greatness and of being liberally responsive to delicate flatteries, deftly rhymed compliments, such ticklings with the end of a Pegasus-plume as Monsieur alone could administer.

The announcement of dinner, by a marshal of the chambers and two refulgent lacqueys, presently divorced the poet and the muse. The great man rose with a stately air and surrendered himself to his valets. In the twinkling of an eye they had stripped him of his flowered *casaquin* and arrayed him in a superb laced coat, the combined hues of which rivalled the red and golden sunset out of doors. Two djins attendant upon Eblis himself could not have rendered service with profounder obsequiousness or greater despatch. Swift as fly-hawking swallows they darted from *armoire* to toilet-table, returning each time with some new gaud to hang upon the Peg of the Universe. In a few minutes Monsieur stood complete—with what a completeness! A majestic periwig with hyacinthine curls of sable horsehair ambushed and crowned him, cascading to his bosom, where its blackness mingled with the snowy foam of laces and the pulsating fire-fly radiance of diamonds. Stars and crosses—the ribbons of Orders innumerable—testified to the respectful admiration of sovereigns, the handle of a jewelled sword of honour, the gift of an empress, coruscated at his hip; the buttons of his long-flapped waistcoat of silvery tissue, the buckles of his white satin breeches and red-heeled shoes were merely hired from a pawnbroker, like the glittering rings which Monsieur strung upon his shrunken fingers, smiling enigmatically at his perfectly elegant, if somewhat lean and cadaverous, reflection in the toilet glass. "A touch of rouge here," quoth the Solon of the Age. "The pallor of Parisian *salons* should by this time have retired in favour of the healthful roses of the country."

The command was obeyed. In each of the sunken hollows beneath the great eyes of M. de Voltaire, eyes black and glittering as coal—like that mineral, capable of burning with a steady red glow or a lambent, quivering flame—bloomed an artificial blush. Then Monsieur, having received from one of the attendant djins his perfumed lace handkerchief, and from the other his amber cane and velvet hat edged with white feathers, took a pinch of snuff! It seemed the signal for which the palace servitors had waited! The lacqueys, with a flourish, threw open the folding doors communicating with the adjoining apartment. . . . Preceded by a marshal with his wand of office and followed by the lacqueys, stepping out upon his attenuated but elegant legs as though to the triumphal music of violins and hautboys, M. de Voltaire went in to dinner.

The dining-room—third of a suite of seven allotted to two illustrious guests whom Polish titular majesty most delighted to honour—was in apple-green and silver. At a table, gleaming with gold plate and silken damask, above which two marvellous chandeliers of Venetian crystal, depending from the carved and painted ceiling by silken ropes, supported a galaxy of twinkling tapers, covers were laid for three. One guest, a tall young gentleman, whose long limbs, stout body and broad shoulders displayed to some advantage the light blue and silver uniform of titular Polish majesty's own regiment of mounted guards, was already there and waiting. As at some three paces from the threshold, M. de Voltaire, with scarlet heels in graceful juxtaposition, executed a bow that was consummate in its mingling of lofty patronage with gay familiarity, and advanced with extended hands, this young gentleman ran eagerly forward, and, throwing his stalwart arms about the fragile personality of the great man, clasped him to his breast—an ursine mode of greeting which seriously

discomposed the effulgent periwig, the jewels, silks and laces of the Solon of the Age—and spread, to the immediate detriment of his complexion, two immense kisses upon his face.

With admirable temper Monsieur extricated himself, gently pushing his stalwart young friend away, and smiling a pleasant smile.

"Faith! my dear St. Lambert, I began to realise what the Nemæan lion must have endured in the hug of Hercules!" He shook his ruffled plumage into order. "I fancied myself for the moment Monsieur La Mettrie of Berlin in the embrace of one of his own theoretical man-machines, being slowly pulverised to a mere pinch of philosophical dust!" He took a pinch of snuff with an inimitable air of elegance. "How have you passed the day? Has the god of War been in the ascendant—or the Muse of Poetry?"

"We paraded at six of the clock, Monsieur," blurted forth the young military gentleman—whose nasal accent now joined with his high features and reddish complexion in proclaiming him a native of Lorraine. "Afterwards, being the equerry for the day, I had the honour of breakfasting at the King's table. Madame de Wagnière and Father Ménou afterwards drove out with his Majesty, in a glass coach with the windows down, drawn by four Angevins in gilded harness, ridden by postilions à l'Anglais, with white leather breeches and velvet caps. And I recited some of my verses."

"To the postilions or the horses? Mythologists assure us," quoth M. de Voltaire gravely, "that the Centaurs were the descendants of Apollo. . . . Doubtless the gentlemen in the leather breeches and English hats, as well as those in gilded harness, proved themselves apt critics of the trot of your metre and the gallop of your rhymes?"

" It was his Majesty who obliged me to recite. And he was good enough to praise. He said," continued the young gentleman, turning red, " that those lines *To the Divine Emilie on Horseback* might almost be compared to—to some of your own ! "

One thin, delicate hand—frail as an Oriental ivory-carving and enriched with dazzling rings—the gracious hand of M. de Voltaire, tapped the florid cheek of his young *protégé*.

" ' Almost ! ' Yours is the modesty of genius, my dear St. Lambert. But you cannot be permitted to depreciate the poetical discrimination of his Majesty, even with the idea of sparing the *amour propre* of a friend. . . . ' Infinitely superior to Voltaire ! ' I will wager, was the Royal comment—Eh ? I am right, it seems ! Well, tell the King he should not have stopped at Voltaire—he should have added, ' better even than Tibullus ! ' The comparison would be as just in the one case as in the other; and the dead poet, believe me, would remain as tranquil as the live one ! But I perceive the first course is already served. Draw to table, *mon cher*, let us partake—not of the ideal dish of the enemy of monarchy—roasted King !—but the *rôt du Roi !* Ah !—you hesitate !—and that reminds me—we are waiting for Madame ! " A twitch of impatience lifted the transparent nostrils of M. de Voltaire, and in either of the great sombre eyes that looked out from portentous arches of eyebrow a red spark of irritation began to glow. " Go," he said to one of the lacqueys, " knock at the door of Madame du Châtelet's apartment. Convey the compliments of Monsieur de Voltaire and Monsieur de St. Lambert, and intimate that dinner is getting cold ! " As the servant flew from the room upon his errand, the Philosopher threw himself pettishly upon a divan. " I will wager," he exclaimed, " that at this moment she has her nose buried in her translation of

Newton's *Principia!* . . . I verily believe—did the end of the world, as predicted by the Calvinists—find her still scribbling at those interminable problems, she would continue adding to her Solomon's temple of blotted manuscript with the most imperturbable composure, and never look up until Leviathan knocked over her ink-bottle with a blow of his tail!" He tapped a diamond-buckled shoe testily upon the carpet. The Lorrainer, whose tongue was tied, as his features were stiffened, by some secret embarrassment, picked up a gold fork from the table near which he stood, and began to tap the handle rhythmically against a crystal goblet, eliciting a clear, tinkling sound. "Ring on, my friend!" said M. de Voltaire, re-opening his eyes, which he had closed; "you chime the knell of my digestion!"

St. Lambert, hugely disconcerted, dropped the fork and began to bite his nails, muttering between his teeth some disconnected fragments of verse. "*Sacrebleu!*" ejaculated the great man pettishly, "if in lieu of anything else to occupy your jaws you can chew the cud of poetry, I congratulate you! To me, at this moment, the clatter of knives and forks appears more musical than the beat of Alexandrines, and the progress of a ménu from the soup to the dessert infinitely more gratifying than the action of a tragedy." At the instant, as the tall Lorrainer, scarlet to the tips of his ears, closed his offending jaws and thrust his hands under his coat-skirts, there was a tapping at the door of communication which gave access to an adjoining room; fourth of the suite, and the boudoir of Madame. It was opened by the remaining lacquey. A brief, whispered colloquy ensued between the attendant and some one unseen.

"It is Toinette—I know the rascal's voice," said M. de Voltaire.

It was, in fact, Toinette, who conveyed the excuses of

Madame du Châtelet, prevented by indisposition from joining the gentlemen at dinner.

II

The dinner was choice, delicate, and costly, the tribute of a Royal chef to an intellectual Grand Panjandrum, whose masticatory apparatus was none of the best. Precious vintages of Burgundy, Tokay, and the Rhineland crowned the goblets. The Solon of his Century ate with cultured appreciation, and drank with the gusto of a *connoisseur*. The Lorrainer stormed each dish with indiscriminating appetite, and washed down the immense quantities of food he swallowed with floods of wine.

Thus, the silken cloth being drawn, and the shining board being replenished with dessert, in priceless dishes of Oriental porcelain, Monsieur de Voltaire cried, elevating a brimming goblet, and rising to his feet—"To the King!"

"To the King, to be sure!" echoed the Lorrainer. He lumbered up to his six feet three inches of height, gulped down the contents of a bumper, and dropped back again upon his bitterly complaining chair, M. de Voltaire observing him with secret amusement.

"Do you read Leibnitz, Monsieur? I think of submitting a proposition to him, when I have leisure. '*Whether the maximum velocity with which a body under attraction travels to a certain centre, may not be determined by the square of the area of the attracting mass?*' It might serve to furnish conclusive proof of several important arguments, not the least of them being that Goliath of Gath, Samson, and Polyphemus were successful in love, which may account for the unhappy endings of these historical personages. At least, so would say the King of Prussia, who does not encourage the presence of ladies at his court, and only worships the Muses. You see his Majesty's portrait upon

this jewelled snuff-box, his gift to me, and within the lid is the inscription—

'Dionysius to Plato

The Tyrant to the Philosopher.'

Vanity would appraise such a gift above its true value, but such things amount to little, *pour mieux dire, a rien!* Nature and Destiny, when they please, form a great mind, endowed with facilities that can advance the Arts and Sciences. . . . Accident and Chance may make a monarch, whose proudest privilege should be the power to recompense the noble labourer of Intellect, whose chief glory should be the distinction of having crowned with jewelled laurels—a Voltaire. I repeat—a Voltaire, for it would be certainly out of keeping with the *rôle* of a philosopher who claims to a just and impartial appreciation of men and things, did I fail, Monsieur, to appreciate myself." He dipped his fragile fingers delicately in a bowl of tepid rose-water, and dried them on a silken serviette, in the texture of which was inwoven in gold and colours the Royal Arms. "Never have I depreciated genius . . . never have I bestowed upon elevated rank the panegyric alone deserved by intellectual loftiness."

M. de St. Lambert, as though unconsciously, began to recite aloud—

> "Reviens divin Trajan, vainqueur douce et terrible!
> Le monde est mon rival, tous les cœurs sont à vous,
> Mais est il un cœur plus sensible . ."

The young man was unhappily inspired. It may be that he was innocent of malice—that some passing imp of mischief suggested the quotation—it may be that certain venomed little darts which had escaped from the carelessly

twanged bow-string of Phœbus Apollo, in the course of the evening, still rankling in his stalwart bosom, were now repaid by a sabre-slash beneath which even the greatest philosopher of the age must wince and quiver, recalling the performance, at Versailles, some half-dozen Novembers previously, of a certain eulogistic-dramatic composition, entitled *Le Temple de la Gloire*, by distinguished amateurs of the Court, and an ambitious poet's desperate bid to win a prejudiced monarch's favour by the ingenious aside, aimed, upon the falling of the curtain, at the effulgent ear, shaded by the kingly periwig, "*Is Trajan pleased?*" Alas, Trajan had not deigned to accept the compliment, but passed on with an unseeing stare, having added the coping-stone to his temple of glory by openly snubbing M. de Voltaire.

The silence that ensued upon the young officer's unlucky quotation resembled the hush that precedes a volcanic eruption. The remembrance of a great humiliation is not the less insupportable that it recurs at the height of success. Such lambent lightnings pierced the gloomy night of Monsieur's eyes that a beholder might confidently have expected to see M. de St. Lambert crumble into ashes. But he remained in his place, tilting his chair, and toying with his gold coffee-spoon, until, upon the ringing of a fairy chime of bells from the steeple of an enamelled clock upon the mantel-shelf, M. de Voltaire arose, now all grace and good-humour, and proposed that they should, according to custom, join the Court circle in the Royal *salons* below. For, as has been already explained, save in poetical theory M. de Voltaire was not a lover of daylight, and seldom permitted himself to be visible until ten o'clock, when, Madame upon his arm, an Aspasia wreathed with diamonds, bewilderingly bedight with furbelows, laces, plumes, and patches, it was his wont to rise upon society.

"Imparting, as they gather lustre from one another,

they dim all lesser constellations with their united radiance," it was written of them. After this night of all nights much of that radiance was to be missed. Solitary thenceforth, Monsieur was to swim through space, receiving no more, but giving only. Satellites were to revolve within his orbit, vacant of that bright comrade-intellect whose light for years had shone upon his course. Lamentable threnodies was Monsieur thenceforth to chant to the Apollonian lyre—precious deposits of regret, entrusted to Royal bosoms, were to attest to his sincerity of mourning. These still remain, elegant, if stilted, retaining a perfume of *poudre marechale* and musk. If ever they were wetted with an honest tear, it dried up long ago.

But let me return to Apollo and Marsyas, who, arm in arm, went out upon the gallery and descended the grand staircase, stepping magnificently to real as well as to imaginary music of hautboys and violins. . . . A moment later, as the sublime footsteps crossed the threshold of the grand *salon* of reception, there arose on all sides a murmur of admiration. Highnesses, Serenities, illustrissimi, notabilities, united in excluding fresh air from the great man's lungs. Borne upon a swelling current of compliments, he floated, gracefully as a swan, towards the upper end of the suite of rooms, where titular Polish majesty waited to embrace him. Inured to adulation, he received it with a humility that flattered, and a gratitude that gratified.

"All this," with a slighting stress upon the second word, "pleases you, Monsieur?" once remarked an envious rival.

"One cannot win glory and undervalue the worth of the prize," Monsieur is reported to have retorted. "Only those can afford to sneer at Fame who, by nature as well as destiny, are doomed to live their lives out in obscurity. The plumage of the eagle, gilded by the sun towards which

he soars, is not beautiful nor glorious in the opinion of the barndoor cock, who pecks for grains in the farmyard."

Ineffable, unapproachable, imperial Monsieur!

III

Towards three of the clock, the superb entertainment having reached its culminating height in a supper fit for Olympus, followed by a ballet written by Monsieur for other revels as courtly and rendered as good as new by the addition of epodes adulatory and allusive to the strophes and antistrophes of previous date, an alarming whisper circulated, like a cold, damp whiff of air from the castle *oubliettes*, amongst the powdered topknots and plumed head-dresses. The indisposition, at first reported trifling, which had prevented Madame du Châtelet from joining the Court circle that evening, was reported to be more serious than had been at first apprehended, was said to have taken an alarming turn. Madame, suffering from a slight degree of fever, had incautiously swallowed the contents of a large glass of iced syrup-orgeat, some said, and others barley-water. Symptoms had supervened which the medical attendant, leech-apothecary of titular Polish majesty itself, had diagnosed as dangerous. As it was, M. de Voltaire had been summoned to the bedside by an alarmed attendant.

In haste Monsieur had, in fact, quitted the apartment and mounted the grand staircase with M. de St. Lambert, lumbering like an attached mastiff, at his heels. He gained the gallery and directed his steps to the door over which the lamp was still burning. It was opened ere his knuckle touched the panel. He passed into the chamber, followed by his military shadow. The large, lofty, octagonal room, glowing with colour, illuminated by the light of waxen tapers burning in candelabra of silver-gilt, was as

brilliant as the heart of a tulip open to the sun. Mythological improprieties, painted with a luscious brush upon panels of apricot satin, formed the lining of the nest. The convoluted ornament of the period ran riot in the furniture, the decorations; it was a delirium of Italian plaster, of ormolu and buhl, with which the three large oaken writing tables, piled with literary equipage, harmonised but badly. A fire burned in a basket of silvered steel upon the hearth-place, a blackened pipkin, brought hastily from the kitchen and crookedly balanced upon the glowing coals, gave forth a bubbling sound to the ears of M. de Voltaire as he crossed the richly carpeted parquet, and went up to the side of the bed, a stately Pagan shrine of lace and satin and precious woods inlaid with mother-o'-pearl, whose goddess occupant, in a cloudery of gauze head-dress, crushed and twisted awry by the exigencies of sickness, sat up amongst her silken sheets and Valenciennes pillows hugging her knees as a mere mortal woman might have done, in a common mortal way.

Monsieur spoke to her. She did not answer except with harsh, rattling breaths, drawn and exhaled through the upper portion of the lungs alone. Her chest heaved irregularly, and dark drops of human anguish stood upon her face. Her underlip drooped pitifully; her eyes—the guiding stars of a great man's existence once, and even now, from long habitude, torches shedding some degree of illumination upon his path—stared, large and wild and strangely faded in colour, out of her long face, a face unbeautiful according to classic rules, it may be, but so finely modelled by the mind, so bright at times with intellect and enthusiasm, so mobile and expressive of the play of the emotions, that Madame du Châtelet's reputation for loveliness had many champions to maintain it. Had—would have, no more ! That silent Voice, heard as plainly amidst the clamour of the Court or the din of the battlefield

as in the quiet of the dying anchorite's unvisited cell, proclaimed it.

She, listening to that silent summons, uttered no word, but glanced awhile, with haggard, sidelong eyes, upon M. de Voltaire, before she faltered hoarsely—

"Oh! my friend—I suffer!"

Greatly shocked and touched, M. de Voltaire moved closer to the bedside and bent over her. The atmosphere of fever that exhaled from her struck him like the burning radiation from molten metal. Her breath, meeting his face, was like a colourless flame. He bent to kiss her hand—small and exquisitely formed, the slender fingers encrusted with jewels of price—and her flesh seemed to scorch him.

"I suffer!" she repeated.

That changed, colourless voice. No subtly melodious inflections—rich organ tones, clarion surprises, sweet, sudden laughter changes, wooing dove-notes left in it. It seared the ears of Monsieur as her skin had seared his lips; he winced and shuddered. Habitually scornful of the ignorance and incapacity of the medical profession, upon the entrance of titular Polish majesty's court physician, grave, bewigged, profound, discreet of mien and soft of step—he turned to him with relief, even followed him eagerly into the adjoining boudoir, where the functionary, painfully conscious that from *this* interlocutor, Latin phrases afforded no secure refuge, uttered himself, for once, with uncompromising plainness.

"There is—I grieve to say it—no hope, Monsieur. One so distinguished in natural science and physiology as Monsieur will easily grasp the situation. Moment by moment, owing to the rapid increase of fever and inflammatory congestion, the energies of my distinguished patient are becoming exhausted, the area practicable for respiration becomes more and more circumscribed. The

upper portion of the lungs alone fulfil their office, and when failure of the action of the heart, accompanied by coma, inevitably results—then Monsieur de Voltaire must prepare himself——"

"To yield the most adorable and gifted of her sex as hostage to the King of Shadows," rolled forth in the sombre vibrating tones of M. de Voltaire. His jaw was fixed immutably; one would have said the ivory mask had never smiled; from under levelled, drawn-down brows the carbuncle eyes looked forth, tearless and inscrutable. "You are powerless, then—you can do nothing?"

The man of medicine gently shook his head from side to side and bowed, folding his fat, smooth hands upon his portly stomach.

"Nothing, Monsieur!"

"You are in error, my good sir!" said Monsieur, in a grating voice. Red lightning darted from the carbuncle eyes, the thin, ivory finger pointed ruthlessly towards the door. "You can remove from the bed of Death one, at least, of its accompanying terrors—*the physician!*"

And he returned alone to the other room.

A slight change had taken place in the condition of the sufferer. She breathed for the moment more easily. With something in them like a gleam of kindness, the haggard eyes turned upon Monsieur as he took her hand. She spoke, slowly but articulately.

"Well . . . you have heard . . . what you know already. . . . I shall not finish the *Principia!*"

"Alas! I fear . . ."

Something clicked and rattled in the throat of M. de Voltaire. He did not finish the sentence. Madame continued—

"There will be . . . no obstacle . . . *now*, in the way of . . . another visit to Berlin!"

"Emilie! I implore you!"

She paid no heed to the entreaty. A bitter smile dinted her livid nostrils and twisted the bluish-hued, clay-cold lips as she went on—

"The King of Prussia will not say of me again, as he said of Madame la Pompadour . . . '*I do not know her!*'"

The ivory lantern-jaws of M. de Voltaire snapped upon a vehement ejaculation of impatience. He controlled the dancing muscles of his face with a strong effort.

"Is this a moment for reproaches, recriminations, resentments?" His chest heaved beneath the foamy laces; he breathed through his nostrils with a shrill, whistling sound. The supreme unreasonableness of her sex, even in that crucial moment, almost provoked him to an outburst of the wrath which the dying woman had known so well how to provoke. But his brain cleared, his potent mastery over himself was re-asserted—he recognised that this was the last splutter of the salt of jealousy spilling from the dying hand of one who had forfeited the right to be jealous, upon the well-nigh extinguished fire of Love.

"You remember," she said, "François, our first meeting?"

The vision that arose in the mind of the dying was at once transferred to his own mental retina. He saw a dingy Parisian lodging, situated at the summit of interminable flights of broken stairs—he saw and recognised the brilliant student, the young follower of Literature, just beginning to be famous. He heard a gentle knock at his door, and wrapping himself in a chintz dressing-gown—not innocent of rents and ink-stains—went to open. A whiff of perfume mounts to the brain of the young man—the *frou-frou* of silks, the tinkle of ornaments, sound in his ears. A mirthful voice, stifling suppressed laughter, announces that three young ladies of quality, who desire to remain

masked and anonymous, have come to pass the evening with M. de Voltaire. Ah! that magic evening! Ah! melodious laughter, issuing from crimson lips, from ivory throats! Ah! bright eyes, shooting radiant shafts of coquetry through loop-holes in the envious strip of black velvet, each one aimed at the susceptible heart of a young and handsome Phœbus Apollo. And then at parting a pressure of the hand—a whisper, not unkind, perhaps a glimpse of guarded beauty, perhaps a promise of something more than a glimpse—and behold! a romance, beginning from that enchanted evening, continued from day to day, week to week, month to month, with verses, gifts, passionate scenes, vows of eternal constancy, culminating in the illicit idyll at the Château of Cirey, a solitude of two in absolute accord and sympathy, riding together along the green bridle-roads, shaded by forest trees—reading history, science and poetry together—listening to the nightingales together, an ideal existence, continuing for many years—until a blight changed the aspect of this intellectual Eden, Adam's impaired digestion and vanishing teeth made apples a difficult diet, and thickly trooping doubts, jealousies, recriminations, reconciliations, relapses, showed forth the inveterate pageant of declining Passion.

But with the death of Love had come the birth of friendship, mutual tolerance, mutual sympathy. Necessary, Voltaire to Emilie—Emilie to Voltaire, by dint of long usage, habitude, and the like. Indifferent, each to each, yet indispensable—a not infrequent anomaly of human relationship. To the world a shining front maintained, an adamantine loyalty to old tradition. Comet flights in company to different courts of Europe—semi-divine honours shared in public—in private, demi-god and demi-goddess no longer to each other, but mere mortals, with miserable human weaknesses to be mutually blinked at, mutual faults to be

ignored rather than screened. And here, the End! Coming in so dull a fashion, neither terrible nor tragic—a dropping of the curtain without the epilogue, as though the play were a failure. The play begun upon that evening, when Madame la Marquise de Châtelet, with two other lovely ladies of quality, came incognita to pass the evening in the garret of M. de Voltaire.

* * * * * *

The deplorable fact of Madame's demise established beyond doubt, groans, sobs, cries of despair, even frantic tearings of a sublime philosophical periwig testified to the poignant sorrow experienced by M. de Voltaire. In the temporary disorder of his faculties, Monsieur might even have done himself some injury, had not M. de St. Lambert, blubbering openly and copiously, restrained him by superior force. A mournful silence succeeded; then as the women of Madame, with other female domestics belonging to the castle, entered the death chamber to perform the last toilette of the corpse, M. de Voltaire, scarce knowing what he did, staggered blindly from the room.

* * * * * *

Day had long dawned, the clock hands showed five, the revellers had retired behind drawn bed-hangings, a blur of heat-mist clouded the rich landscape, quails were calling in the stubble, the gatherers were already busy amongst the bronze-leaved vines. Looking up at the shuttered windows of the palace, they broke rude, artless jests upon the courtly sleepers behind them, one of whom, had they known it, had tasted of the sleep that is Death.

From the grand entrance, unbarred by a puffy, yawning porter, stepped into the fair, shining outer world M. de Voltaire, whose inner universe was one rushing, chaotic blackness, pierced with electric stabs of fierce, remorseful recollection. Behind him, at a respectful distance, stalked the inevitable M. de St. Lambert. When on the terrace

of the outer staircase, close to a striped sentry-box, the great philosopher staggered and fell prone, the huge Lorrainer lifted him, as a nurse might a passionate child, and dusted his superfine crimson and gold habiliments with gentle fillips of his military hat. The visage that opposed itself to the stolid regard of St. Lambert was all blurred with weeping, the eyes seemed extinguished in their deep sockets, the fallen jaw betrayed the toothless gums, the recurrent hiccough of hysteria convulsed the frame he supported. The soldier and the philosopher fell, sobbing, into each other's arms as wheels crashed over the gravel of the courtyard below the scene of their emotions, the dusty leather curtains of a travelling-carriage were pushed aside as the tired team obeyed the check of the bit. No servant occupied the footboard, but a fagged postilion stiffly dismounted, let down the creaking steps and opened the door, releasing a stout man in a mouse-coloured travelling capote with a green velvet collar and cuffs, who, breathing after the fashion of the pursy and asthmatic, slowly climbed the marble ascent. As his large moon-face rose within range of the philosophic vision, M. de Voltaire raised his chin from the shoulder of St. Lambert with an exclamation of surprised recognition respectfully echoed by the plethoric stranger, who, profoundly bowing, unbuttoned the mouse-coloured, green-velvet-trimmed capote, drawing from an inner pocket a longitudinally-folded letter, which, with the utmost deference, he presented to the philosopher. Then two spots, scarlet as the two large seals upon the letter, flamed in the cheeks of M. de Voltaire. The dim-burning fires of the carbuncle eyes blazed anew as they devoured the superscription, traced rather scratchily by a Royal hand.

"There will be no obstacle *now*, in the way of . . . another visit to Berlin!"

The words rang back upon his memory—the haggard

eyes rose before his mental vision. Those eyes, so soon fated to close in death, had had, at the last, the inward sight that pierces with premonition into the future. For, by the hand of Herr Klaproth, ostensibly a diamond merchant of Frankfurt—in reality one of the private couriers of Frederick the Great—it had come! The invitation secretly longed for, the summons desired with ardent yearning by a Great Man desirous of a change of scenery and associations—the fifth summons to the Court of Prussia, with a remittance of six hundred golden louis, contained in a leather bag, in charge of the trustworthy Herr Klaproth, "*to pay tolls on the road!*" With the Gold Key of a Chamberlain, the Cross of the Prussian Order of Merit and a yearly pension of twenty thousand francs, all illuminated by the twinkling lamps of great gala receptions and carousals waiting at the end of the road, thus strewn with roses by a king of soldiers for the triumphal progress of that king of letters, M. de Voltaire.

Monsieur read the King's letter while the King's courier waited, hat in hand. He pressed the missive to his lips ere he folded and thrust it in his bosom. No indiscreet rapture was permitted to betray itself in the expression of his countenance. His deep eyes glowed beneath their sombre arches, his bosom swelled, his back straightened itself. The old, bowed, wasted and prematurely decrepit man who had a few moments ago leaned upon M. de St. Lambert for support, had vanished. Phœbus Apollo, elderly, but still divine, stood in his place. The stolid Lorrainer, mystified by the sudden transformation, stared at him open-mouthed. The ivory hand tapped him gently on his stalwart shoulder, he blinked again in the dazzling radiance of the Olympian smile.

"Monsieur, this letter is the trumpet-call, rallying my scattered faculties beneath the *bâton* of their marshal. The King of Prussia has summoned me to his Court, and

whither gratitude, respect, devotion urge, thither I must drag myself, even were it at the cost of an existence which was never so lightly valued by me as now, when the guiding star which ruled its compass has been extinguished! Herr Klaproth"—he turned to the stout emissary of royalty —" your arrival finds me profoundly plunged in sorrow. Death has robbed me of that which I held dear, the golden thread has been plucked from my web, I stand a tower reft of the ivy which at once supported and beautified it. Be my witness that I obey a supreme command with a supreme effort—and that no obstacle now stands in the way of a second visit to Berlin!"

THE JEST

I

These things befell on the last noon of the month of April, in the same year wherein the Danish King, Waldemar Atterdag, finding that day for which he waited ripe enow for plucking—led his mighty army to invade the island of Gothland; and made knights cheaply, and stripped peasants barely, and squeezed purse-proud burghers dry as so many stockfish—besides sacking the rich city of Wisby—which, it is said, was delivered into his hands by his light o' love, Betterl, the daughter of Dietrich the Goldsmith, from whence hath sprung the saying—of one who is considered likely to succeed in some adventure or emprise: "*He hath the ear of the goldsmith's daughter!*"

Truly at the first setting out of a narrative, the grey quill is apt to neigh and curvet like a frisky courser, o'er fair field of parchment white; so that curb and rein are of little avail to hold her; though it is like that she will limp and hobble like any galled jade, and need that the spur be jagged into her unwilling sides oft enough ere ever the task be done. Yet of the deeds and sayings of Spurnworld, that mad jestmonger and forger of wild wit-bolts, let a true tale be set forth according to the scribe's best ability, for the enlightenment of this, and other generations yet unborn.

On the last noon, then of the capricious month of April, when the dial on the church tower of the little walled town of Wittau shadowed dinner-time, and savoury hints of cabbage-soup and bacon-dumplings were breathed

delicately from whispering chimney-lips, Heinz Bierdopff, burghmaster of that town, stood forth in the market-place, to nail upon the door of the Town Hall a Proclamation issued by command of Friedrich, Duke of Lünenburg. For the town of Wittau stands amidst the heaths and forests of the Lünenburg country, as many a wight well knows; and the Princes of that noble line ruled then, as now, full felly and high-handedly.

Master Heinz Bierdopff, then, with sober gown tucked in at the leathern girdle, silver-clasped and studded, over whose boundaries generously bulged—this in despite of the anatomist—the true pineal gland or abdominal wallet, wherein the heart and soul of man are situate—having turned his furred sleeves aside and given into the keeping of his clerk, Christian Zell, the worshipful hat, which to the fancy of the urchins of Wittau loomed above brows portentous as those of the Olympian Zeus—if indeed they had ever heard of such a monarch !—having borrowed a hammer of Memling the carpenter, and spat in workmanlike fashion in the palms of both hands, speedily fell to upon the task appointed him in virtue of his office, and, in not more than half a score lusty blows, drave the nail through the stout parchment and home to the very head in the sturdy oak. The good townspeople of little Wittau were gathered about the steps of the Town Hall, and many a clown and boor from distant village gaped and wondered in the throng; and was foremost among the burghers, the lusty presence of Master Hans Wirth the furrier, a sound-hearted man this, and of wealth and repute reaching beyond Wittau. And the Lutheran Priest of Wittau, Pastor Gryn, was there, with eyes beaded to two twinkling points of curiosity, and mouth as closely nipped-in at the lips as a miser's purse; and clad in cassock of devout and sanctified rustiness, and his starveling sacristan, like a lean hound, nosing by his elbow. And in the forefront of the throng, a Cap-

tain of Archers, hook-nosed, hawk eyed, and sullen, yet a comely wight to look upon in his short-sleeved hauberk of shining links, and gay surcoat with cognisance of the Dukes of Lünenburg embroidered thereon: his flat-topped iron headpiece, whose bright burnish drew the sunbeams, and the goodly steel-shod crossbow at his back. With him were a company of his men, swarthy fellows and bearded, as well armed if less bravely clad; and if their limbs were sternly disciplined to order, the eyes of them were free to wander at will, and their desires to soar and float, light as thistledown, in at the gable-windows overhead, whence were thrust fair faces of women and lasses—like flowers grown in darkness, and stretching out for light. Only from the gable-chamber of the inn no head looked forth, and though the cherry-tree that climbed the wall tapped with blossom-burdened branches against the panes of clear horn, as much as to say, "Look forth, Margrete," no answering hand put back the casement-hasp. For the young mistress of the inn sat in orphaned sadness, as one who mourns a father dearly loved, and had scarce cared to look upon the sun since the day she lost him.

Now the crowd surged and murmured like bees in swarming season, and dogs and urchins yapped and shrilled upon the edges of it, and the grave brown houses were about, and under foot time-worn stones and grey; while on the red-tiled roofs, spotted with lichen and rosetted with houseleek, the doves were preening and kukelluring; the vertical sunbeams striking rays from their burnished necks of emerald green and sapphire blue, and turning their rosy feet to the hue of blood. From a patch of green turf that lay before the church of Wittau uprose a maypole, its head already crowned with a Spring diadem by the youths and maids of the town, but its other garlandage as yet unfinished and lying upheaped at its foot, for the morrow was to be May day, when the May Emperor should

deliver up the flowery coronet held since the year before, and aid in the choosing of a successor from the Town Council, the which ceremony yearly was performed with merry games and curious ceremonies.

Heaven over-capped these goodly sights with its dome of pure forget-me-not, deepening up to the golden key-stone which flamed in the middle arch. And over the azure meadows of air gambolled clouds, fleecy and playful as lambs, frisking to the tune a little south wind piped them: a tune that trembled between laughter and tears.

Now the parchment being nailed upon the door of the Town Hall, the puckers smoothed out of the Burghmaster's face, and thereon came creases of contentment, and he straightened his back, and wiped his ruddy bald head with a fair kerchief of Antwerp weavery, and said—

"Ho, ho! Of a verity the old trunk lacketh not sap as yet, though the crown putteth forth leaves no longer. The sturdy oak it quivereth to the very core with that last blow. I rede ye bear witness to the Duke, Sir Archer, that I, his humble servant Heinz Bierdopff, Burghmaster of Wittau, have performed his behest, in the manner enjoined upon me. Therefore, you may return whence you came with your rascally gang—I would say, your valiant following of depopulators. Phoo—phoo! Pheugh! Between the exercise and the oratory, my masters, I am somewhat breathed."

And the Burghmaster fell to mopping anew. Thereupon Ellmer, the Captain of the Duke's Archers, stood forth and said—

"Yet, worshipful Sir Burghmaster, is one thing wanting to the complete carrying out of the Duke his command. Saith his Highness: "After that the Proclamation be affixed unto the door—'"

Quoth the Burghmaster, breaking in upon the matter peevishly—

" Alack ! Could you not ha' said that word ere this ? ' Affixed,' quotha, and I ha' nailed it ! "

Said the Captain of the Archers—

" I take it these two words mean the same thing."

Quoth the Burghmaster, devoutly—

" Saints grant it may prove so ! "

On which the Captain of the Archers, scorning the interruption, continued : " Said his Highness, ' After that the Proclamation be attached or affixed unto the door— ' "

Whispered the Burghmaster, " A' gave me my choice of two ways then ? Why could not the dunderpate ha' said so at first ? "

" —' Unto the door, let the Burghmaster, or the Pastor of the Parish or another, declaim the same with a loud voice unto all the townspeople assembled, that the unlearned who cannot read may profit by the counsel contained therein, as well as the wise and bookish.' Wherefore, and with a good courage, I rede ye begin."

At this the good Burghmaster's lower lip fell pendulous, and his tongue clove to his palate, and cursed he, silently as behoved a wise man, his Highness's over-particularity, while the good folk of Wittau began to clamour and demand the reading of the Proclamation. And the noise waxed great, and loudest of all who shouted for the reading of the Proclamation was Vell Klein, the stone-deaf cripple who sate him in a little cart in the shadow of the gable of the inn ; and had so sate any day in thirty years, rain and shine. And that this was a strange thing none might have doubted, but that none gave thought to it.

Stood Master Heinz Bierdopff, Burghmaster of Wittau, centre of a circle of staring eyes, and steaming gullets, and imperative tongues all vociferating : " The Proclamation ! "—and lustily cried—

" Alack the day ! Know ye, gentlemen archers and townspeople of Wittau, that an heavy misfortune hath

befallen me this day. For but scarce an hour agone did a vile swine run into mine house, grunting most scurvily; and whipped betwixt my legs ere I was ware; so that I fell and broke my spectacles, without which trusty aids to vision I cannot tell chalk from cheese, or a rogue from an honest man!"

Quoth the Captain of the Archers, surlily: "Mine own vision deceives me if you have not an whole pair astride upon your nose at this present moment of speaking. So stand you not there gaping like a new-caught carp, Burghmaster, but out with the matter, no delaying!"

As every man's eye proved this truth to be, and sweat-drops of anguish chased down the Burghmaster's spectacled nose, came an outburst of guffawing.

"Ha, ha! Ho, ho, ho! Ouch! A-ha! A-ho-ho! Alack, my poor sides!" Necks were craned to convict the author of the interruption.

"'Tis Master Hans Wirth. Who would ha' thought it? So sober a man!"

"This will be the outcome of some quip or crank that hath been whispered in his ear a week agone. A' takes after his father, poor soul, who could not hear a merry tale o' Friday without disgrace came o' it o' Sunday. For a' would burst out so, at mass or in sermon-time, under the priest's very nose!"

"These things do run in families. His mother saw but one jest i' her life, and that she died of. For she cried out sorely i' her pangs, and, quoth the gossip"—

"Sh! Burghmaster hath found 's tongue."

"You are mightily moved to merriment, Master Wirth."

"Nay, 'tis over now, saints send you set me not off again. Ha, ha! Were we not boys at school together Burghmaster? Have we not ached o' the one end and smarted at the other—odds tingling twigs o' birchen tree! —side by side on the dunce his bench? Why not out

with it at once that you cannot read, and so end the matter?"

"Not read, quotha! Do I not read the Town Records daily, and the transcribed laws of this our fair Duchy of Lünenburg, the which are bound up together in a goodly vellum volume, pegged with yellow ivory, and having leathern handles and red clasps. To which Sebastian Zell, my clerk, is ready to bear witness."

Cried Zell—

"May I die a rogue's death, master, if there has been any such volume in the house since that Burghmaster's clerk I ha' been: and I ha' served you twenty years come Lady-day!"

Thundered the Burghmaster—

"Dost thou interrupt, thou witling—thou stripped goose-quill, thou dried-up inkhorn? Know, gentlemen archers and people of this town, that the goodly vellum volume of which I speak it is my head; and my ears are the handles thereof, and my teeth the ivory, and my lips the red clasps be. And in that volume are bound up the records of this town and the laws thereof, as they were in the volumes of my father and my grandfather, which were Burghmasters before me. And sith I speak not sooth, in that ye can condemn me."

"A' speaks sooth. Long live Heinz Bierdopff, Burgh-master of Wittau!"

Master Hans Wirth stroked his brown beard, a comely ornament, well trimmed and just sprinkled with sage and honourable silver, and nodded. "Ay, ay, you have come to 't, if in a roundabout manner. Read can we not, nor write, we burghers of Wittau, no more than our fathers could before us, nor do we suffer in our business thereby. For of scholarship cometh scathe, and a rogue is never so great a rogue as when a' hath pen in 's hand. But book-learning and quill-driving may make a priest no more than

a priest, nor add to him one jot of roguery, 'tis right well known. Therefore let His Reverence here read to us the Proclamation of his Highness to our better knowledge and great comfort."

Arose the hubbub again.

"Let it be read by the Pastor. Let the good father read it!"

"Ay, the Duke said 'the parish priest' at need. I have nought to say against it."

The worthy Pastor smiled like a hungry weasel, and waved his yellow hands like a gor-kite's pinions.

"Not so, my masters and good people all. For there are but two books wherein a priest of the Reformed Faith may lawfully read; and of these is one the Psalter and the other the German Bible of good Master Martin Luther. But upon secular matters it behoveth him not to look, without danger to his priestly vows." He stabbed, with a glance of one poisoned-gimlet eye, Master Hans Wirth, who evinced an unseemly disposition to snigger at the eeliness evinced by His Reverence in wriggling out of a difficulty—and turned the other on the black-browed Ellmer. "This being so, Sir Archer," ended he, "I rede ye read yourself, without further delaying."

Quoth the Captain of the Archers, with the passing shadow of a grin—

"Most pious Pastor, know ye not that the only book in which a soldier may read, is the glorious book of War! In no other volume it behoveth him to look without danger to his martial oath of loyal service. So may I not do your behest. But the Duke's command was laid upon me in such wise that I might not, after the Proclamation was duly posted, suffer burghers or peasants to depart unto their housen without due knowledge of the matter contained therein. So that, if Heaven drop not on us a scholar from the skies, who may, without prejudice, fulfil this duty, you

are like to dine and maybe sup on naught but fresh air. Archers, do your duty!"

Lo, and upon the word the face of things was changed. The ogling archers brought their eyes and hearts down in a twinkling from high window-level, and were men of war once more. As the startled crowd strove to disperse, they opened out in line, and next moment the line was a circle of relentless looks and shining steel. Women screamed right shrilly, and unarmed men swore to be so taken unawares, but no blow was stricken of axe or dagger, and not a bolt was loosed. Yet the text of a sermon on submission to the will of the reigning powers was enforced by the dropping of metal-weighted cross-bow butts upon toes refractory, and the stinging of smartly rapped shins. Truly in gruesome plight were the good folk of Wittau, by reason of the lack of scholarship, which is not common in these days, when the poorest hind is qualified to forge his neighbour's sign-manual to a bond for moneys. I wist not, indeed, but where they stood there they might have stuck to this day, their dinners cooling by neglected hearths, the while the world went on growing older, had it not chanced to hap that one, to their eyes a stranger and unknown, came very suddenly into the market place of Wittau, and standing, looked upon them, saying to that inward counsellor in whose ear we whisper the things that may not be spoken aloud—

II

"O' my halidom, here is roguery toward. Never yet was this nose o' mine at fault in scenting out such."

Meanwhile, most of those who looked upon him gave praise to the saints, scenting possible deliverance, and Master Hans Wirth said privately to the Burghmaster—

"Now an' if this worthy gentleman can but read,

delivered shall we be from the curse which yonder scurvy parchment hath brought upon us."

Thereupon the Burghmaster composed his countenance to befitting dignity, and as the wall of archers parted, he stepped through and went to the new-comer, and saluted him in sober fashion. The which courtesy the stranger returned, bowing to the very earth, and springing back to attitude—being more tall than ordinary—as jauntily as a puppet of elder-pith.

"Noble sir"—

Thus the Burghmaster began, but the stranger, smiling to the puckerage of the little wise wrinkles about his eyes and mouth—for he was older than his years in guile and experience, as many wights might know to cost of them—put up a hand in deprecation, saying—

"I am not noble."

"Honourable gentleman"—

"I am not honourable."

By dint of previous badgering, the choler of Master Heinz Bierdopff lay near the surface, ready heated. Said he, testily, "I' the name of all you are not, what are you then?"

Quoth the stranger: "A man of letters, for one thing." And at this those who hearkened cried—

"O, happy chance that sent thee hither, our deliverer to be!" While the stranger said in his sleeve—

"I speak no lie in this. Five letters doth it take to spell the word, R O G U E, so that I am a man of five letters at least. And from one end of Germany to another is there not one to be found who shall deny the truth of this saying." Then he smiled upon them again, saying: "If that ye seek my credentials of scholarship, know that I have none save such as I carry at my fingers' ends."

And he twirled his fingers as mountebanks use, and

marvellous long and lithe were they, and whiter no nobleman might have owned them. On this answered the Burghmaster—

"Credentials we seek not, worthy sir, but present proof of your scholarship, that desire we with longing. Behold here a Proclamation with seals, very terrible and hugeous, posted on the door of the Town Hall of this town by order of Frederick, Duke of Lünenburg. And needs be that it be read aloud to all assembled, the which reading it fitteth not that any of those present undertake. Therefore we beseech your worship to render us this office, for the doing of which ye shall not lack a due reward."

The eyes of the stranger twinkled right pleasantly upon this, and in dulcet tones craved he to know whether that reward might be paid in thanks, which are the silver coinage of the lips, or good broad pieces? Then gat he assurance that his meed should be in both if that pleased him. Whereupon said he, and this a little pompously, in the tone of one who knew himself master of the situation—

"What ye require, that will I."

Then he threw o'er shoulder his mantle—which was passing rich in material, and curious in device, being dagged and cut after the foreign Court fashion—though stained with wanderings in wood and wild and rent in more places than one—and made ascent of the steep flight of steps which led to the door of the Town Hall with a tripping gait which had in it both grace and fantasy. And while every glance devoured him, and every ear gaped to drink him in, he looked upon the Proclamation that hung there, very keenly, and those that marked might have sworn that he whitened in favour, and that his grey eye lightened, and that the dints in his nostrils deepened, as though the breath of life had sought entry at her accustomed gates, and found them stopped by deadly fear. But he who stood before them was one who had sported with danger from his youth

up, and the knowledge that he was now in peril did but quicken his wits and string his muscles more tightly, and it was with a loud voice and steady that he read as follows—

" Know all men by these presents that I, Frederick Duke of Lünenburg, fifth reigning Prince of the hereditary line, do, in the interests of the peace and welfare of my subjects, and for the satisfaction of certain grievous wrongs which I, in mine own person, have sustained at the hands of a certain pestilent Rogue, who with beguilings, chousings, cheatings, and cozenries of divers kinds doth wander o'er the face of this our German land : do command my servants and liegemen, to wit : that if the said Rogue be discovered in or traced to any city, burgh, vill or hamlet within this Duchy of Lünenburg, or be found wandering afield or in forest like the uneasy spirit he is : that these my servants and lieges shall seize upon the said Rogue, and with short shrift and scant mercy, break him upon the wheel until that he be dead."

Here did the reading cease, as forth from pouch the reader drew a kerchief of silken damask and blew therewith three sounding blasts upon his nose.

Cried the Burghmaster, " How now ? Is there not other matter to follow ? "

Answered the stranger, " Of a surety, yea. But 'tis the custom after that the opening preamble of a Royal Edict or Princely Proclamation hath been read, for an herald to blow a fanfaronade upon his trumpet. Trumpet have I none, therefore do I perform upon the only instrument that is to hand ! "

Some bystanders there were cackled at this, but the Burghmaster saw 'twas gravely meant, and rebuked these rude fellows. While so he did, the Captain of the Duke's

Archers glowered with hawk-eyes upon the stranger, and gnawed his beard-tuft, and presently cried out—

" Is there no ending to thy task, Sir Clerk? Remember the silver crowns, and on, with a good courage, and i' the hangman's name! For I take it the more pertinent matter followeth heretoward. Hath not this vile Rogue marks by which those who meet may know him? and are they not set down i' the Proclamation by the Duke's scribe? "

He who stood on the steps of the Town Hall looked down upon the Captain of the Archers, and said, but not aloud—

" Marks! Ay, there is one rogue shall be ear-marked and tail-notched to boot if my cunning bring me clear of this pit-trap, and thou and I e'er meet again." But being gifted in the guidance of his features, he cast a mask of simple benevolence and pure peacefulness upon them, and craved for silence, and filled up the void with ducal eloquence, as here to wit—

" Wherefore, that ye may be in no doubt what manner of man is he whom ye should seek, let it be known as follows—

" Of names hath he *not* a thousand to an honest man's poor twain.

" He is *not* a comely, straight backed, proper wight, such as women love to look on.

" He hath *not* power to assume the gait and manner of a noble at will, or by times the bearing of a boor or clown.

" He hath *not* a merry tongue and an open hand, nor doth he speak smoothly and like one scholarly bred. Moreover, let it be held in mind, *videlicet*—

" That he is *not* tall of stature, and sanguine of complexion

" That his eyes are *not* grey and quick, nor his hair of a yellow hue.

That he doth *not* wear parti-coloured hosen, nor a Floren-

tine hood and dagged mantle : that he carrieth *not* pouch of vair, and silver-hilted dagger, like a gentleman : that he hath *not* points to 's doublet with bells to these, and lastly, that upon his staff there is *not* the figure of an ape, sitting on a globe, carven very curiously and like to life.

" Wherefore in remembrance of these things, and in your obedience, under pain of death where unfaith and disloyalty be proven in any one of you, I leave ye to carry out my will.

" Friedrich, Duke of Lünenburg,
" His X mark."

Cried the Burghmaster, lifting hands and eyes in pious admiration heavenwards—

" Most clerkly writ and scholarly read to boot ! And here is a thing to note, my masters, how that a thing as little as a little word may bring an honest man to bale. For, saving the presence of this most learned stranger, if ' Not ' and ' Nor '—those wordys twain, were struck out of his Highness's proclamation, then should we, as loyal burghers, be forced to seize upon and incontinently put to death, this worshipful expounder as a proved rogue and recognised rascal, so eloquently would the description herein set forth, speak in his disfavour."

Mused Ellmer, glooming upon the stranger with sullen eye, " Ay, height, mien, and attire : tally would they in all particulars. Is there roguery in this ? "

Then the stranger came nimbly down from the steps, crying : " In that I have not translated succinctly and in good faith to ye who have hearkened, the Proclamation hangeth there for my impeachment. Pray ye look upon it, and you shall find that as the matter standeth, so I have spoken, and that of all here assembled there is not one who cometh not under suspicion of roguery, excepting myself ! " And he shook his carven staff aloft, and on it

was a globe indeed, with an ape which sate upon it cross-legged, and apishly gibed the world.

But the priest rebuked him, saying, " Nay, Sir Stranger, such suspicion there may not be. For in this town is there not, nor ever hath been, the thing ye call a rogue, neither male nor female."

The stranger looked upon the priest, and said in thought, " Now would I wager my carven staff against a tooth-pick, this town, it is a very nest of roguery, and he who speaks the arch rogue of them all. Alack ! my lean pouch, thou shalt not increase i' plumpness here, I wist. For where the crows be many, the worms be few." But his outward man bore he courteously, and with credence of furnished fact, saying: " Indeed, and can this be so ? Then is your town the tenth wonder of the world, let the other nine be what they will ! "

Quoth the Burghmaster, " The good priest speaks not without authority. You must know it is but a century or six agone, that a certain saint of supreme holiness did visit Wittau and, finding the devil rampant therein, bade his Hornship to the duello, though the Black One was armed with his red-hot trident, and the holy warrior had nought but a thigh-bone out of the Church reliquary and a gallon or so o' holy water above proof ! "

Said the stranger, " Belike 'twas an hot engagement ? "

Answered the Burghmaster, " You may take my word for that. Wellaway, the stound and smother ! I can smell the singeing now ! "

Looked the stranger upon him with seeming admiration, saying, " You are a ripe old man, I trow, to mind so clearly what did hap centuries six agone."

Returned the Burghmaster, pishing and pshawing Master Hans Wirth, who had plucked him by the gown, " 'Twas my forefather saw it, and that is as good as I, and the tale has been handed down i' the family for genera-

tions. But with the defeat of the Evil One, mark you, original sin fled from Wittau, and its people ha' since been noted for gravity, piety, wisdom and weight!"

"True it is," quoth Father Gryn, taking up the tale, "that some are drunken betimes, but they will be drunk with soberness. And o' the close of a feast-day there will be blood-letting, I deny not, but a man shall probe you his neighbour i' the vitals as gravely as any chirurgeon."

"Ho, ho, ho!" the stranger laughed. "A goodly company of saints, in sooth!"

"And o' holidays they will dance and kiss with one another's wives and sweethearts. But they kiss not in secret, but loudly and openly: you may hear the sound of their bussing a mile away: and they dance not lightly. Come the e'en of to-morrow, which is May Day, you will find the greensward round yonder Maypole as though a company of horse had hoofed it. Truly, as Sir Priest he saith, there is neither fool nor rogue in this our town of Wittau."

"Ay, that is well proven! Burghmaster speaketh like book. Shout, neighbours, shout, for the Burghmaster!"

Turned the stranger upon the holloaing crowd, and in his look was that which smote them into silence. Said he—

"Yet for all this gainsaying is there no place o' the earth where roguery aboundeth not. Rogues there are of all colours, red rogues, black, white, brown and grey. There are rogues of the crown and sceptre, rogues of the axe and crossbow; rogues of the stole and cassock, rogues of the pen, rogues of the clothyard and shears, and rogues of the spice-shovel and weighing-scale, as there are rogues of the harrow, spade, and ploughshare. And this will I prove to each one of you. Leap ye naked forth into the world, 'tis roguery that dandles you, vowing, despite your crooked legs, hump-backs, and bleared eyes, that fairer babe was never born to gladden mother's heart. Is't

not roguery that, when ye weep for the bright moon that hangeth i' the midnight sky, bringeth ye a piece o' green cheese to stop your puling, swearing that i' verity heaven's shining orb be made of such matter? Rogues sport with ye i' childhood and fare with ye afield at the herding age or sit upon the same bench i' the workshop to share the nooning. Rogues lie i' your bosoms by night and smile i' your faces by day. Let but your life's poor flickering candle wane to die out, 'tis a Rogue that comforteth ye with words of Holy writ, with one eye wandering up the chimney to see where the stuffed stocking hangs, ere the roguess taketh away your pillow, and pincheth your nostrils that Death may come the quicker; and so win her handsel from the other rogues that are waiting to step into your shoon and shed crocodile's tears upon your coffins. Nowhere on this mad world of ours is there a spot to be found so big as my thumb-nail, that beareth not the print of a roguish shoe-sole. And belike, considering the many disguises that roguery is wont to wear, this poor wretch, for whose blood your Duke thirsteth, is not so far from an honest man in that he maketh full confession of his calling. So wend ye home, good folk of Wittau, and remember this my rede!"

Ceased the trumpet-tones that for an instant or twain had blown all ears awake, and the townspeople dispersed at the stranger's signal as though their Emperor had bidden them hence. Home went each man to the goodwife and the dumpling-pot, but not one whistled as he went for lack of the chewing-cud of sober reflection, for the stranger had set them thinking.

Stood he from about whose perilled feet the toils were hardly yet loosed, in the emptying market-place, and received of the good Burghmaster the promised handsel of thanks and six silver crowns to boot. Never yet rang silver bells more sweetly in human ears of dinner-time, for

nought save his tongue had the stranger had betwixt his teeth since the dead eve of the yesterday. And never before hath it chanced, I wist, that a man should be so well paid for reading his own death warrant, since the world began.

Came it to pass then, that the Burghmaster, full to the throat of simple admiration for scholarship, professed and just proven in the stranger, and Master Hans Wirth, who was a travelled wight, and one who had rubbed elbows with men of many countries in his wanderings, craved that the gifted man of letters would drink a cup with them to better acquaintance; and this Daniel, who no sooner saw the door of the lion's den ajar, than straightway he lost all longing to get him out from thence, consented gaily. So wended they towards the inn, while the priest, whose snout was never dry for want of dipping in other men's beakers, and the surly Captain of the Archers thitherwards accompanied; and the rough soldiers followed, full of lusty cheer in the promise of ale of the township's best brewage.

And the Burghmaster rapped with his staff on the porch floor, and gave private word to a serving-man who came to the inn door, and, he gone upon his message, chuckled as the full-bodied and plethoric are wont to do, and cried. "Sit, sit, my masters, and let us be merry now that the time for sadness is overpast. For this inn can furnish two of the things that archers and gentlemen of fortune love best. And of these, one is a beaker of noble wine, and the other, a fair maiden. Fair, said I? Yea, and fairest in all the country of Lünenburg, comely as our maidens are held to be. I am not wont to be garrulous, sirs, but 'tis a very paragon, ask Master Hans Wirth else, eh, neighbour?"

Smiled good Master Wirth with that painful contortion of feature which a finger thrust under the third rib is wont

to evoke i' the most composed countenance, and withal the blood tinged his hardy, sunburnt temples, and the stranger, looking on him keenly, mused on the folly folks are apt to term Love. For by an arrow of the capricious urchin had the honest furrier been skewered through the midriff, 'twas right plain to see. And he questioned of the Burghmaster as to the maiden's name and parentage?

Said the Burghmaster, "Her name it is Margrete á Martin and she is an orphan, richly dowered, and fair as I have said. Died her mother in the birth-pang, and Old Martin, her father, left her sole heiress to all that was his, inn and lands and gear and gold. 'Tis but three months since he gave up breath, and she weeps for him continually, and hath never smiled since the day she lost him."

Said the strangely softly, and in the tone of a man who communes with himself, "Now surely herein is roguery!"

Master Wirth looked sourly upon him, and the Captain of the Archers, at the mere word of roguery, was all agaze. And the priest said, "Spoke ye indeed of roguery?"

And the stranger said "Ay. For an' if the old man had taken his goods with him, then might the maid have wept, but seeing that he hath left them behind, there is no reason. Offer her now the old man back in exchange for gold and gear, I will wager you an empty purse against a full one that she cries "Nay" to the bargain."

Quoth the Burghmaster, fumbling in pouch, with a face of anxious unease. "Speaking of purses, I misdoubt me that in giving ye those crowns of silver awhile agone, a goodly bezant of gold did slip in among them. And 'twas a marked coin, so I shall tell it among strangers at a glimpse. Pray ye draw forth the crowns, so shall I see whether or no I be in error."

Then did the subtle stranger lift hands and eyeballs eke to the rafters and cried, "Now would Heaven that mine oath did not prevent me! Else would I do your will."

Said the priest, "You have sworn an oath?" And he answered, "That have I, an oath huge and swinging, though to which of the saints 'twas taken I cannot now remember. But its purport was, that I engaged me, upon pain of eternal discomfort, never to look but twice upon any coin that I should receive, but once in pouching, and once in spending the same. And I cry you mercy, but I am a religious man, and this oath may I not break."

Laughed the Burghmaster, saying, "Keep the oath whole for me, Master—in sooth, your name hath slipped my memory."

Said the stranger, "My name?"

Broke forth the black-browed Ellmer. "Thy name, Sir Nameless, unless thou art bound by another oath not to own one."

Said the stranger blithely, "In England, when that I did travel, men called me Spurnworld."

On this hearing, muttered the Captain of Archers, "The name hath a roguish ring about it." But aloud said he, "And thine own title in good German?"

Upon which replied Master Spurnworld, "Truly, 'tis so long agone since 'twas given me, that I doubt I have mislaid it."

And at this those that sat with him laughed, and Ellmer was silent for very choler.

III

To them in the porch as they sate entered a maiden most delicately fair, but sad and pensive of aspect. One would have said, looking on her, that she was the heiress of some great noble, but indeed 'twas the orphaned mistress of the inn, old Martin's daughter. And the company rose to greet the mistress, and she gave them greeting in pleasant fashion, and her serving maid and man brought goblets, and slices of raw ham on a platter, and thin diet cake, and

a goodly flagon of strong wine, while the hinds furnished beer to the Duke's men.

Plucked Gryn the priest at the mantle of Master Spurnworld, who stood somewhat apart, and peered up into his face with beady glittering eyes, saying, "What think ye of the maiden? Is the Burghmaster's picture over-coloured or no?"

Said Spurnworld softly, "Is this the maiden? Me-seemed it had been Hebe or one of her daughters. For when all the vats on Olympus were bibbed to the bottom, and Jupiter and the old heathen gods died all of thirst, the ministering goddess took service on earth as a tavern-wench. And the tale goes that she wedded an innkeeper."

Quoth Hans Wirth the furrier, who stood within hearing, "You have a sharp wit, Master Spurnworld."

He sighed and said, "Needs must I keep the blade keen that I do carve my daily meat withal."

Said Hans Wirt, "And you do wag a merry tongue."

Cried Spurnworld, "'Tis my clapper wherewith I scare the beaked and taloned griefs that would feed o' my heart else."

And the furrier prayed him to step aside, for he had word for his private ear. And when they were beyond hearing, said, "I design to use thy good wit to good purpose, an' if thou art willing. Do thou from this maiden, whom indeed I love, and whose settled sadness hath grieved me sore of late, win one hearty wholesome laugh to cheer her heart and mine withal, and I will be at all your charges whilst that here ye stay. For I have travelled i' my time, and know that a lean pouch is a dull companion. Thine shall wax no leaner for pleasuring me in this."

Laughed Spurnworld in his sleeve, and said, "Strike hands on the bargain! For by my roguery—"

"By thy roguery, saidst?"

"By my natal day, on which I was thrice christened;

once in church; the second time in a muddy ditch whereinto my nurse dropped me; and the third time in warm water wherewith my mother sought to cleanse me from the mire—the thing is done!" And he bade the furrier watch how things should hap, and stepped to the maiden, and saluted her, saying, "Greeting, sweet hostess."

And the maiden turned white brow and fair gentle eyes upon him, returning his courtesy with "Gentle guest, you are welcome to mine house."

Said Spurnworld, "And you to mine."

Whereat the Burghmaster opened round eyes upon him, and cried, "Here is a strange saying! Did I not just make plain to ye that house and gear were this maiden's? and how shall it be that they are yours?"

And Spurnworld asked him with much feigned simpleness, "Is it not a common usage for travellers halting at a strange city to lie at an inn?"

Quoth the Burghmaster, "Ay, as the whole world knows."

Said Spurnworld, "Then do I only that for which there is example. To wit, this is mine inn, I being a stranger, and in calling it mine I lie therein most woundily!"

Spoke the archer, looking on him suspiciously, and said, "In all that has to do with lying art thou well skilled. You are master of that craft, I trow?" And he called to his fellows, "Ho, there, comrades, cease to steep your beards. For we have a steep to beard, or twain, ere we win back to Lünenburg." And with sorrow each archer wrung his lip-tufts, and tightened his baldric, and prepared for departure. And their Captain drank one parting cup to the house's prosperity, and bade its mistress farewell, and gave the good-day to the worshipful masters that were there, each according to his worldly deserving. But when he came to Spurnworld he smiled upon him, but with the teeth, and said, "Most scholarly scholar, I shall hope

hereafter to see your knowledge hang as high i' the eyes of the world as meets its deserving." And he jerked his thumb, and spat, and ended: "Farewell. We may meet again ere you ha' prayed for it."

And Spurnworld louted low, and took three fantastic paces back and louted again, and with doffed cap and air of deep humility paid compliments as good as those he had received, saying, "Most archerly archer, may your valour be rewarded, and that ere long, with the stripes it merits. There is a whisper abroad that the Duke, thy master, purposeth to bestow on thee, and that at no far-off time, a fair bride. Liveth she i' that tower of Lünenburg's Castle which men call the Torture Tower, hidden from every eye save that of her master and the favoured wight whom he shall elect to receive her embraces. Most fair is she, though in truth her countenance is somewhat brazen, and the secrets her bosom doth hold are sharp pike-staves—sweet pangs of Love which shall pierce you to the very vitals when that you do clasp her i' your arms. So farewell, most happy bridegroom, and all grace attend your wedding!"

Cried the Captain of Archers, very furiously, "Rogue! Shalt hear of me anon!"

Answered Spurnworld, "I doubt it not! So, so. Go, and the saints go with ye, such of them as fear not to lose their characters through being seen i' very vile company!"

And the Captain of Archers, waxing more than ever wroth, so that the foam stood on his black beard and his brows wore passion's knotted purple, shook his gauntlet-hand before the face of Spurnworld, while those who witnessed knew not whether to laugh or tremble. And like bolt from crossbow shot from him the word "Gallows-bird!" and no more words might find vent for very choler.

Thereupon mocked him Spurnworld, hurling at him in

like fashion the word "*Archer!*" as though the crown and sum of all uncompliment were conveyed in that single term. And, his cup of wrath being full to the brim, the Duke's man gathered his followers and departed from that place speedily.

IV

Now while the others looked on Spurnworld with wonderment, came Hans Wirth and pulled him softly by the jerkin and whispered, "Hast not performed thy bargain. 'Twill be a tough task I have set thee, belike?"

Then Spurnworld put the furrier aside, with "Peace, peace! Have I not said it shall be done?" Went he straightway to the fair young mistress, and said to her, "Dear maid and hostess, I am sorely hungered; pray ye tell me how much money I shall eat for?"

And the young mistress told him, "Sweet sir, our charges are set to suit all purses. With my serving people shall a poor traveller eat for twelve pence, at the next table thereunto, for eighteen pence, but a gentle guest may be served singly and with the best cheer for four and twenty pence. This was my father's rule."

Answered Spurnworld, "Dear hostess, to eat for four and twenty pence will best convene unto me."

Called then the maiden to serving man and waiting wench, and bade them set a cover within.

But Spurnworld stayed her, saying, "Nay, for that I am at all times used to breathe the free air of Heaven, will I that the table be set here i' the porch." In his own mind he said also, "So shall none creep upon me unawares. For the hunted stag that crept for shelter into a cattle-byre was taken ere the morning, poor antlered fool. Too much wisdom have I, I well wot, to be trapped even as he!"

Now was the table well dight with pure white linen and

well carved trenchers, and bread and wine set thereon, and dishes of meat. Seeing this, said Spurnworld, "Gentle sirs, will ye also eat for money?" but those about him declined and he ate alone. And of courtesy the hostess sat by to cheer the guest while he ate, and this was a custom followed in Wittau, and a right pleasant one, whenas the hostess be young and fair. And the priest and the Burghmaster sate also, for there was that in the stranger's manner that made men long to know more of him; and Master Wirth lingered, for he would see whether Spurnworld wrought as he had engaged to do.

Cried Spurnworld, gleefully, "Ho, ho, gentles! this is good meat and well seasoned. Nourishment lurketh even in the savour thereof. Surely might a man with a slight stomach dine upon so noble a smell, and afterwards pay the host's reckoning with the sound of two silver marks chinked together. The which is a brave conceit, and worthy the merry rogue that did devise it."

Said the Burghmaster, and leaned forwards, hands on staff and chin on hands, eager to hear of a new thing, "Of what rogue speak ye?"

To him answered the guest, "Even of a most near kinsman and dear comrade of mine, worshipful sir. 'Tis the same, an' if ye will have truth, who lieth under the Duke his ban."

Lifted the hostess grave sweet eyes upon him, and said—and she had a voice like the deeper notes of the wood-dove, "Truly I might wish your worship better company."

And Spurnworld answered her, "Dear lady, but I am contrained to pity him."

Questioned she, "Doth he ail in aught?"

Looking on her, Spurnworld dropped a dolorous lip, and fetched a sigh right heavily, and said, "Truly, he hath a grievous complaint."

So woeful were his looks that the maiden sighed for ruth, and turned on him two deep eye-wells brimming full with clear pity, and said, "Alack! poor wretch! Of what nature is this complaint?"

Said Spurnworld, "A' cannot eat bread that is honestly earned. 'Tis very wormwood between 's teeth, and hath been from childhood."

And the maiden rebuked him gravely, saying, "Dost pity him for that? Oh, part from him ere he kill thy conscience with 's counsels, and mar the brave future I read in thy face. How can such an one be thy friend?"

Replied Spurnworld, "Dear hostess, meseemeth it is the test of true friendship, that one should weep when his friend be lachrymose and grin like a Barbary ape when he is merry. And truly when I am lean i' the purse and pinched in belly, then is no wight more sorrowful than he. And when that Fortune smileth and broad pieces jingle in pouch, then a' doth royster and ruffle it with the best. Eateth roast kid at this moment, I doubt not, and sippeth from the cup which is filled for him by a hand not less fair than thine. Yet have I tasted bitter fruits of his roguery by times, and sworn to part from him ere the morrow's morn. Yet such morn cometh never, and shall not, I deem, until that I am laid under sod."

Quoth the Burghmaster, "Art such a friend to him? I rede ye warn him that he set not foot in this country, for I love not the shedding of blood, but the Duke will be obeyed."

At this answered Spurnworld, "Truly, Sir Burghmaster, I have warned him a thousand times. But the rogue is never so merry as when his neck is in danger, a' playeth hide-and-seek with Death as if the grim mower and he were playfellows twain. I would not wager that at the moment of speaking he is not i' this very town. Yet is he very cunning, and apt at disguises, so those who have

seen him i' one mask are scarce like to know him in another. And in whatsoever house he hath played a roguery, there setteth he his mark over the door, so that all men may know who hath been with them. Ha, ha! Oh, 'tis a merry lad! a cunning cheater! a bold beguiler! a rousing rascal! a king of cozeners! Let us have goblets here. Health to the Rogue of Rogues! Pledge me, my masters, pledge me!" And he filled and drank, somewhat wildly, and bade them hearken, for he knew a rare song made by that very rogue in praise of roguery, and this it was his mood to sing. And he asked for a lute or psaltery, and the mistress bade one of these instruments be brought, and he smote upon the strings with a master-hand and sang in a marvellous mellow voice, sweet enough to wile the birds off the bushes in pairing-time—

"Oho! Oho! a rogue am I!
In town or village where I be
Passeth the time full wearily,
Wherein I work no roguery;
As honest boor or clown doth strive
From day to day in labour dree,
So that the sullen earth may give
The scantling bread by which men live—
So labour I in roguery!

Of craft I have such mastery,
In tricks and wiles such wondrous skill—
Cries goodman, 'To the Rogue wi' ye!'
When a' would wish his neighbour ill.
As Princes and their statesmen eke,
With deep-brent brows and solemn guise,
Forge laws to yoke a nation's neck
And wring gold tears from out her eyes—
So do I think out rogueries!

With all this toil gain I small grace,
Scant fare to bind body to soul,
For that I bare the very face
Sir Parson hides aneath his cowl;

When that we meet, looks he askance,
Then to his Psalter turneth eye;
Whiles lout I with all reverence,
As who should own himself, perchance,
A rogue out-rogued in roguery!

So this mad world spins on, I wis,
And brave men barter blood for Fame,
And wise do chaffer body's bliss
For soul's rest, and sweet saintly name;
The while I sit and mock them, I,
Whose guile shall live on lips—good lack!
And who, certés, the death shall die
Of any saint that e'er brooked rack,
Or spider-wise against the sky
Did dangle from the gallows tree!
So ends my song of roguery!"

And he rent at the crying strings with a hand curved like a kite's claw, and sang more wildly—

"My mother was a peasant lass,
A fair flower blown in wayside grass,
A haughty noble chanced to pass,
Roguery, Roguery, Roguery!

So I twirled spit by kitchen fire
Although I had a noble sire . . .
Or else the Devil is no liar!
Roguery, Roguery, Roguery!

They cast me out upon the waste
The raven and the wolf to feast—
Man had less mercy than the beast—
Roguery, Roguery, Roguery!"

Then he ceased on the note as if something rose in his throat and choked him. And when he had made an end, he was well thanked and commended of those who had hearkened, but though the young mistress praised the tune of the Rogue's song, she held the matter to be scurvy.

But the Burghmaster cried, "Now by our Lady! it

were pity, an' if he sings so sweetly, that this hedge-piper should e'er be put i' the cage, or broken o' the wheel of Justice."

And Spurnworld laughed and said, "Well is it for him that same good dame Justice sometimes weareth her scales upon her eyes. For Torture is a strong black wine, of which this merry fellow would not taste, so sweet to him is his life of roguery."

Asked the young mistress, "Can such life taste sweetly in the mouth of any man?"

And he answered her, "Dear mistress, for every sorrow that in life we find, there is a joy to balance it. And for every roguery the which turneth out scurvily and bringeth the doer stripes instead of profit, are many which turn out well. And every wight that liveth, striveth in the race for somewhat. The prize one seeketh is Fame, that of another Riches, that of another Revenge, that of another Pleasure, while the clod-poll runneth for the bare bread. But this rogue reapeth of all these gains together. For from end to end of this our land is his name noised abroad as a master of roguery, so that an' if one wisheth ill to another, he prayeth not, as Christians commonly do, that he may fall down and break his neck, or that his wealth may depart from him, or that his wife may adorn his brow with that ornament which all husbands do hold in abhorrence, but a' crieth, 'May ye fall in with the Rogue, as home ye wend, and that is the worst I can wish ye!' And is not Experience counted as Riches by the wise man Solomon, who, between you, I, and the distaff, had a tinge of roguery in him. Truly this Rogue getteth Experience every day. And when he playeth roguery on one that hath wronged him then getteth he Revenge. And for Pleasure, hath he not the smiling face of Nature to greet him in his wanderings day by day? Doth not the green earth spread under him her goodly carpet, and the deep azure sky cover him with

hangings embroidered with sun, moon, and stars? Hath he not, instead of one poor home, a thousand firesides, where the wood crackleth i' the chimney, and red wine crowneth the cup of horn, or the silver-brimmed beaker? Do not ripe lips smile to greet him and bright eyes beam for him of a hundred transient loves, instead of one poor lover, for there is nothing merry maidens like so well as a straight leg, a bold eye, and withal a spice of roguery."

And the fair maid Margrete looked on Spurnworld reproachfully, crying, "And can a thousand firesides where the welcome is warm for the rich guest and churlish for the poor one, be worth one home, humble an' ye will, but rich in love and won by honest labour? Or are an hundred light-o'-loves worth one true wife or sweetheart, whose spotless faith and simple tenderness this poor misguided man may never know, for how should a pure and honest woman love a rogue? Alack, alack! If perchance a true woman did give her heart to such an one, methinks her punishment would not be long a-coming."

Looked Spurnworld moodily on her, and muttered, "I trow, mistress, ye are over hard in judgment. Roguish he might be to others, but to her staunch man and leal, and so deserving of her love."

Cried Margrete, "Nature is against that. A rogue to one, a rogue to all! Oh, to be pointed at as the Rogue's wife! To bear at bosom the Rogue's children! To pass under gallows, and know that there shall her high heart's lord hang one day! Alack! If so wretched a woman there liveth on this earth, she hath my full heart's pity for her lot."

Groaned he half aloud, and pushed the meat from him, and then set his chin upon his clenched hand, and gloomed upon the ground a little space. Whereat she softened to him a little, and said more gently—

"Eat ye no more?"

He answered, "I have eaten—I have eaten, and the dessert was a hard nut for cracking. An' ye will preach me so eloquent a sermon, Sir Priest, o' Sunday, then will I come to church."

Said the Burghmaster, "In truth, I never saw the maid more moved."

Quoth she, "I crave pardon an' if I spoke rashly, but pity for that wretched woman my mind painted, prevailed in me." And she sighed, and softly wiped a tear away.

V

Rose up then Spurnworld in the middle of them all and cried, "Now I would God that roguish wight were but here to speak for himself. He should defend his calling in such wise as ye could not but hearken. Yet I say unto you, that an' if I were he I would wager with you, fair mistress, this golden chain I wear about my neck against a kiss from your sweet lips, and with these worshipful sirs this gay mantle, and furred pouch against Sir Priest his cassock, and Sir Burghmaster his worshipful hat, that in one day should be wrought by roguery, in this town, such miracles as are not brought to pass except by the faith of the righteous. Thus, the sad should be made merry, the hungry should be fed, the sinful should become saintly, the lame should be made to walk, and the deaf to hear, and for the crowning——"

Quoth Master Hans Wirth slyly, "And for the crowning should a true maid be brought to love a Rogue! Nay, hesitate not, for such a master of roguery might as well undertake the one as the others."

And Spurnworld said, "'Twould be but one hedge the more for his nimble wit to overleap. Ay should he say to that also."

The Burghmaster watered in the mouth with pure

longing, and wistfully said he, " Now, by'r Laykin, I would that rogue were here with us. For of all things I love a jest, so that it be played discreetly."

Answered Spurnworld, " Truly, though I am no rogue, I have consorted closely with this merry trickster, and in the more mild and innocuous forms of roguery am I somewhat skilled. I will do my best to perform my part, an' if ye will accept the wager ? "

Looked the Burghmaster sidewise, like a dog that longs for and yet dare not take the bone a stranger offers, and quoth he, " May there be an harmless kind of roguery ? "

Whereon replied Spurnworld, " Why, as to that, is not oil of vitriol harmful and corrosive even as oil o' olive be mild and dulcet ? and doth not shoemaker's oil, which is of very vile savour, offend the nose which oil of roses delighteth ? "

Said the Burghmaster, " Apt are you at reasoning. Yet, indeed, my gorge riseth at the mere name of roguery. Howbeit I will accept the wager, my worshipful hat against thy furred pouch."

Quoth the priest, " And my holy cassock against thy gay mantle will I risk. Is the thing agreed ? "

And Spurnworld said, " Fair and softly. That which I have said will I stand to. Is our hostess content to risk the kiss against the chain ? "

Held he up the chain, and all saw that it was a rich linked piece of goldsmith's work, with a wrought medal hanging therefrom, in the middle of which was set a fair great carbuncle stone, flaming like the mystical rose of the alchemist or the red sun in midwinter sky. And the thing was of price, for these jewels are of magical power, and are to be found but in the land of the pigmies, of whom Herodotus spake, growing under the horn of the animal hight *Unicornus*, whence they may be taken by the hunter but with danger and dread.

Said the Burghmaster, as the young mistress frowned and tapped her dainty foot upon the ground. "Come, come, niece Margrete, for niece art thou in love to me as I to thee uncle—accept thou the wager. I will look to 't that an' if the stranger win he shall not sip too deeply." And the maid yielded, with a blush, and the wager was agreed upon between them.

This being so, Spurnworld spake unto the hostess, saying, "Gentle hostess, I crave ye tell me how much money was I to eat for?" And she told him, "For four and twenty pence!"

Said he, "My purse is straitened. I will receive the money now, an' it be pleasing to ye?"

Answered the young hostess, "Sweet sir, in this country 'tis the guest who payeth the host and not the host the guest."

Cried Spurnworld, "Now am I undone. For verily did ye say unto me that for four and twenty pence should I eat, and therefore bent I to that employment, as one who should earn money. And justly won is the wager, I trow, for if life and death depended on the eating could I not eat one morsel more. Therefore I rede ye pay me that which is my just due for labour done, and wear and tear of teeth, palate and vitals."

And he held his hand out for the money with the lifted brow and grievous lip of one sorely injured, and by reason of this quaintness, the grave young hostess was compelled to laugh, though she set one white hand before her lips to hide it. Laughed those also which hearkened, and, hearing them, was Margrete forced to laugh again. Upon which cried the furrier—

"Oh, brave! I ha' not heard those sweet bells tinkle for many a day. One forfeit hast thou of me already, Master Spurnworld."

VI

While they thus joyfully laughed, came Misery and stood before them in person of a poor peasant boor. Bowed was his back with carrying loads of fagots to warm others, and his oxen that were well covered with hairy hides, and their feet by Nature shod with hard horn, were happier than their master, whose sole garment hung in rags upon his gaunt limbs, and whose soles were naked to the flints of the highway.

Stood he with the mire of the country and the dust of the town caked upon him, and louted low before Comfort and Ease. And in mid-laughter, the eye of Father Gryn fell upon him, and his sharp eye soured, and the laugh in his mouth was bitten through with a snarl as he said, "What and whom seek ye?"

Prayed the poor boor, whose name was Johann Sachs, "Most worshipful Sir Priest, most holy sir, even yourself, to entreat ruth and compassion."

Snapt Father Gryn, "See ye not, base churl that you are, I am seated in worshipful company?"

Upon that the kind hostess put in word, saying, "Nay, good Sir Priest, see you not the poor peasant is all a-tremble? Pray you entertain his petition, for the love of Our Lady and the holy saints!"

Said the priest, "Marry, but the scurvy hilding oweth me twelve silver crowns of rental for the glebe land which of me he holdeth, and hath this twelvemonth."

Upon this brake out the poor boor with wailing, and said, "Alack, Sir Priest! the land is marsh land and bringeth forth in wet seasons scarce enow for me and mine to starve on. Knew I that but in a dry season might I pay my debt. So I took money in my hand, and hied me to a wise woman that dwelleth in a cave hard by, and I bargained with her

for a charm to get me a dry season, which she agreed to sell. But I ha' a rich neighbour who liveth on better land and high, and the losel gets him to the wise woman the very next day, and bribeth her with richer gifts to compound him a philtre to draw on a wet season, which alone may bring forth his crops. So gallons o' rain have I had since, and never a fine day. And therefore I beseech your holiness to be merciful!"

Then the priest, scraping his lean chops, "Awell!" said he, "I will come apart and speak with ye, but I promise nothing."

Strode he from them with whom erstwhile he sate, and the boor, like a starved mongrel, trotted at heel. After them gazed Spurnworld somewhat wistfully, and full soberly and gravely craved he counsel of the Burghmaster, saying—

"I pray your worship enlighten me. Shall it fortune that he shall infallibly be condemned to perdition that playeth knavery upon the person of a priest of the Reformed Church?"

The Burghmaster shook his head full solemnly, and answered for him Master Hans Wirth, "Why, to that, ay! Damned shall that sinner be, I wot, and served up with brimstone sauce of the hottest!"

Quoth the Burghmaster, "Neighbour Wirth speaketh sooth. To jest on a priest is a parlous ill deed, and well deserveth such punishment."

And Spurnworld sighed and said, "Alack, that due respect to Church and priesthood should mar so many a blithe jest! 'Twas the merriest piece of roguery entered my sconce but now. And you should ha' laughed till your skins burst. Woe is me!"

Nibbled the Burghmaster the dangled bait, and broke silence with, "There are degrees in sinning, and degrees in damnation too, I wot. So unfold to us this jest!"

And as Margrete twitched him by the sleeve, he said peevishly, "Peace, wench. Am I not mine own master? Methinks roguery be catching, neighbour Hans. For I feel it itching i' the joints and a tender yearning to things forbidden, that I have not known since that I was an urchin and robbed the clerk his orchard, and daubed cobblers' wax o' the schoolmaster's stool!"

Said the furrier to Spurnworld, "Let us hear thy plan."

VII

And Spurnworld spake and said, "Hear ye! As I entered the town this morn, I had need to pass the gallows and thereon I saw a sorry sight."

Said the Burghmaster, "Ay, ay! There hangs ripe fruit on the medlar-tree for a warning to all that evil consciences do carry. 'Twas a wheedling beggar which with feigned sores and a canting tale of grievous misery did coax the pence out o' Charity's pouch, and steal the bread from the teeth of Poverty. So we e'en strung him up there out of the way. 'Twas a twelvemonth or twain agone, I mind not how long, but the kites should ha' done their work by now."

Said Spurnworld, "O! my halidom! that have they, and featly! Hearken now. Was there a brave breeze blowing when that I passed underneath him, and in a twinkling, wump! came the skull of him down at my feet. "Rogue greets brother Rogue!' quoth I——"

Here the Burghmaster turned round eyes upon him, with, "Anan! What said ye?"

Thereat the beguiler bit his tripping tongue, and was taken with a cough so grievous and great that Master Hans Wirth was forced to smite him between the shoulders.

But when somewhat eased he took up the thread of narrative, saying, "Thus, to shorten a long tale. The

headpiece dropped, as I have said, and I wrapt it in my cloak and carried it away with me." Drew he from beneath his cloak that grisly remnant of mortality, the empty house wherein the living soul of a man once did dwell, and held it up before them. Whereat the young mistress screamed right shrilly, and the Burghmaster, sharply nipt in the tender flesh of the upper arm by fair feminine fingers that clutched at masculine broadcloth in fear's extremity, roared like a wounded lion. Whereon said Spurnworld, " Sweet mistress, I crave pardon. In sooth the poor cully hath a fearsome grin."

Smote the Burghmaster with his staff upon the ground and cried, " Such an one her own fair mask of flesh hideth. On, on with the jest, I say ! "

Laughed Spurnworld in his sleeve at this, saying, " Truly our burghmaster hath a growing appetite for roguery." But he spake aloud as follows : " Briefly, the jest is this. I would have gulled the good priest with this skull, even to the parting of coin, believing it to be a wonder-working relic : if the sin were but a little less than deadly."

Quoth the Burghmaster, " Think not o' the sin. Are not collops best flavoured o' fasting days ? "

Said Furrier Wirth, " Truly, pity it were should such sport be missed. Let us be merry o'er the trick, and mourn for 't after ! "

" Ye wot," said Spurnworld, " that I must be alone with the priest if this is to be carried out ? But ye may lie concealed and so mark all that passes. Hide ye i' the porch : there shall ye see without being seen, and hear without being hearkened."

Said the Burghmaster, " With a good will. And so come thou, niece Margrete, for ill it is that the young should set themselves up to rule their elders. And very fitting it is that you should learn to distinguish between innocent

roguery and vile roguery, and moreover, thy lips are at stake." And Master Wirth joined in persuasion, and the young hostess yielded, for she had a secret hankering to witness the sport, and those three made haste to hide themselves in the porch as Spurnworld had bidden. And through the lattice-work they might peep, and so see without being seen and hear without being hearkened.

VIII

Sate Spurnworld then upon the carven settle that stood beneath the gable-window of the sleeping-chamber where, in fresh, perfumed linen, was the sweet mistress wont to lay nightly her fair body that excelled the fine web of Flanders in perfume and whiteness. And the *bel trouvaille* he had gathered under gallows placed he before him, and struck a posture of meditative contemplation. And the priest returning found him thus, with elbow on knee, and thoughtful chin balanced on three finger-tips, and eyes turned inwards, ruminating.

Said he, looking about him, "How? Are the good company gone?"

And Spurnworld answered him, "Stepped they within the house on a matter of business. How long agone I wot not, having deeper things to meditate on."

Said the priest, "I pray you tell me what treasure you have there?"

Started Spurnworld in feigned affright, even as a miser disturbed in counting hidden gold. Quoth he, "Treasure? What treasure? Nay, no treasure have I!" Then a pang of conscience quaked through him, and he smote his breast, but not over hardly, and said, "May saints forgive the lie! 'Tis an holy priest! Only a rogue could doubt a priest." And he drew the priest aside, but not out of hearing of those that lay in the porch, and whispered in his

ear, and said, " Reverend Sir, I have found a priceless jewel this day. Look else ! "

And he showed the headpiece to the priest. And the priest told him, " I see but a mouldy skull."

Thrust Spurnworld the skull beneath his nose, and cried, " What seest thou now ? "

Said the priest, " Truly, I perceive a parlous evil odour."

And Spurnworld answered him in these words, " Know, O most worthy Sir Priest, that, as I entered into Wittau this morn, plodding on, looking to earth ever and to sky not at all, as is the way with erring man, this skull fell from above and rolled at my feet, and a fear fell upon me and a shrill voice said, ' Sister, you have dropped the skull of the great arch-wizard, Brandonius, the which we did steal from his sepulchre because of the property it possesseth of turning base metal into gold when ye shall rub it thereupon, and working marvellous cures upon the blind, lame and deaf. Shall we not alight and pick it up ? ' Upon which another slender voice squeaked, ' Sister, there is no time to lose. For the skull, it must lie, rather than we two witches should miss the Sabbat ! My broomstick, on ! my broomstick, on ! ' And thus the two witch-hags flew over me and I picked up their prize."

Cried the priest, in astonishment, " Can this thing be true ? "

And Spurnworld said, " Is not the skull here for witness ? "

Quoth the priest, " And changeth it base metal into gold ? and doth it work cures ? "

And Spurnworld made answer, " Even as the witches said ! "

Said Father Gryn, " Do thou prove this to me now, and ten silver crowns will I pay therefor. But the proof must ye give, for I take nothing upon hearsay."

And Spurnworld laughed in his sleeve, thinking, " Ho,

ho, how kindly the ass taketh to thistles." But to the priest he said, " Let the proof be made herenow ! For unto us approacheth one upon whom the healing virtues of this wizard's headpiece may well be tested."

Looked the priest upon he who came thither, and answered, " He whom you see is Vell Klein, a crippled beggar who is also afflicted with stone-deafness. A' hath lived on the alms of the town these thirty years. And the comely wench who draweth him in his little wooden cart is Gredel, his wife, to whom he hath been wedded but a twelvemonth. And if it were possible that any woman of Wittau should e'er be called a jade, then is she most worthy to wear the title. For as I passed by the little brown hovel at the corner of the Pudding Market wherein dwell Klein and his wife, no later than yestereven, and peeped through a chink in the window, seeing great light streaming therefrom, I saw what it bringeth the blush to my cheek to dwell on, and this I will tell thee, but not aloud."

And he whispered in the ear of Spurnworld. And Spurnworld made moan with the priest, and said, " Truly this world is an evil place, and roguery is rife therein ! "

IX

On the stage of the day's doings then came Vell Klein, the deaf cripple, drawn in a little cart, painted green, by the stout Gredel, his wife. And he made mumping show of his infirmities as beggars use, crying, " Charity, gentles all ! Charity for a deaf crippled losel ! "

And the poor boor who stood afar off, still waiting the high pleasure of the priest, gave of his penury a farthing to the canting cripple. Whereupon Vell Klein blessed him with a wry grimace of scorn at the smallness of the gift, twisting one side of his slit-mouth awry the while the other side turned down in gratitude and mock humility. And

his wife Gredel wheeled him in his chair against the inn, so that he sat in the shelter of the gable, and the poor boor gave a hand to help the woman. Whiles they wrought to this end, Spurnworld spake, saying softly to the priest, " How will ye ? Shall the healing virtues of this wondrous headpiece be tested on this beggar ? "

And the priest answered, " Be it so agreed."

Whereon said Spurnworld, " 'Tis well ; go thou aside, for I must be private with him, and watch with all thine eyes."

Went the priest apart and Spurnworld chuckled, and Vell Klein cried, looking upon the good wife sourly, " Home wi' ye now, Mistress, for here be no excuse to linger. And no junketings nor strayings from home, nor tongue wagging i' the Market Place, nor whisperings by the hearth, while the place of its lord stands empty. Douce and soberly, douce and soberly. Else will I beat ye as wool is beaten. Away ! "

And he shook his staff as one well used to wield the magic rod which may bind with a spell of submission to rule marital the toughest and most obstinate she. Fled the woman swiftly, upon that, and Spurnworld drew nigh, and looked upon the knotted and cross-grained swart-growth of humanity with the mellow eye of intending benevolence. Whereat Vell Klein beat his breast and cried loudly, " Charity, noble gentleman ! Charity, worshipful sir ! Charity for a deaf, crippled losel ! "

Spake Spurnworld, and still dwelt upon him as something precious, infinitely rare and worth the gazing at, " Art a cripple indeed ? "

The beggar answered, saying, " All the town knoweth Vell Klein's infirmity. Have not I lived upon its alms these thirty years ? "

Said Spurnworld, " You are deaf, in sooth ? "

Vell Klein whimpered and groaned, saying, " Deaf as a stone ! May the saints witness to it ! "

Then Spurnworld smote his hands together, and said,

"Now, lucky is the chance that caused this unhearing human stock to cross my path!"

Quoth the deaf cripple inwardly, "A' is not nice of his language. 'Unhearing human stock' is a foul name to tack on to the tattered jerkin-tail of an honest mumper. But a' shall pay for 't ere we part, or my name is not Vell the son of Klein!"

Then Spurnworld rested one foot upon the chair-wheel and hovered over Vell Klein with hawk-eyes aglow, and set to the beggar's ear the pursed-up mouth of one who could impart mysterious things, and whispered, but so loud and clear that those who listened in the inn porch might hearken: "Know, O stone-deaf cripple, that a grievous secret lieth upon my soul. And under threat of death have I sworn, saying that no man who walked o' the earth should ever hear this secret. Now do I labour with it even to bursting and thou comest at my very need. For thou walkest not the earth, being a cripple, nor canst thou hear, being deaf."

Quoth Vell Klein briskly, for he longed to hear the secret, "Ay, ay, deaf as a stone!"

Said Spurnworld, "'Tis my comfort to know thee so." And he whispered again, and said, "Know, O deaf man, that as I entered this town yestereve, did I pass through the Pudding Market. And therein stands a little mud hovel, I know not to whom it belongs. But a goodly light did stream from the windows, and when that in I peeped, wine and roast fowl did grace the board and eke most toothsomely. And at the board were guestys twain, a comely wench in a kirtle o' blue and damson petticoat, like to her who has just departed from us, fair and comely and bursting out o' her bodice for plumpness. Ho, ho! And side by side with her an archer o' the Duke's Guard, as wanton a springal as ever plucked ripe fruit in another man's orchard."

Now the eyes of Vell Klein had rounded by degrees until their lids would stretch no further, and the eyeballs projected as the eyeballs of a roast sucking pig that have wept rich gravy until they are about to drop out on to the platter. And he groaned aloud.

Cried Spurnworld, "Now by my fackins, thou dost play the part of a listener rarely for one that is deaf as stone. Keep it up, keep it up! In truth I watched them awhile, both the good wife and the gallant. Kissed they each other with sounding smacks——"

"Now may the foul fiend——"

"And the wine bottle kissed they also!"

"Alack, my good liquor!"

"And ate and drank and were merry. And, thinking with sorrow of the honest owner of wife and meat who in his absence was thus bedevilled, I groaned aloud. Whereon the archer ran out very furiously and seized me, and made me swear even as I have said, upon this holy relic which I carry."

Drew he the thief's empty skull from beneath his mantle and thrust it grinning in the purple face of Klein. But the cripple, scarce heeding, bellowed like a baited bull, crying, "Trollop! Ho, thou trollop! I am undone!"

Thereat Spurnworld feigned fear and wonderment, crying, "Alack! Heardest thou all I said? Then am I half forsworn."

And Vell Klein frothed at the mouth, and clawed the air for want of more solid rending matter, and gasped, "My staff!" and seized it and leapt up (O wonder!) out of the wooden cart, and kicked it over with one bandaged leg, roaring, "I'll hie me home and—O, thou jade! Thou vile wench! Not a bone i' thy body but shall ache for this!"

Cried the beguiler in feigned amaze, "Woe's me! What! Art not a cripple? A moment agone ye were deaf and had never a leg to stand on!"

Whereat bellowed Klein, "Is't not enough to give any man ears and legs too, telling such a tale? Roast chicken! Wine! And an archer! O slut, slut, slut!"

Then jolted he the wooden cart upright with another kick—so mighty a one that none might doubt the miraculous soundness of the limb that dealt it—and so strode away, dragging behind him that wherein he had been dragged for thirty years. And afar off the lean priest and the poor boor gaped as men wonderstruck and felt upon their heads the sparse growth creep and rise in awefulness. For neither doubted but that he had witnessed a miracle. But from the porch came strange gurglings and curious snortings as of men who strove to contain themselves from laughter with might and main, and these coarse sounds were mingled with a titter feminine, running like a thread of shining silver throughout a woof of hodden grey.

X

Beckoned then Spurnworld to Gryn the Priest and struck a fantastical attitude of triumph, and cried, "Come hither, Sir Priest. What? Is not this wizard's skull a bone of virtue?"

Answered the priest and said, "O wondrous! Had not mine own eyes beheld it, I had not believed thee on thine oath. Here, take the ten silver crowns I promised ye, and give me this talisman—this treasure!"

And he held out the goodly coins in one lean claw and stretched the talons of the other eagerly for the thief's skull.

Quoth Spurnworld, "Say ye ten crowns? Twenty, reverend Sir Priest, and cheap at the price. For ye have forgotten that this skull possesseth another property, worth more to its owner than the mere healing of bodies infirm."

Wonderful was it to witness the struggle betwixt Desire and Avarice, but Desire came off conqueror, and the priest yielded, muttering, "Twenty, hum! 'Tis a sore price, but yet, there, take the silver and give me my head. Give me my head! O wonderful! Most wonderful!"

And he poured the silver into the ready palm of the deceiver, and clutched the foul morsel to his bosom, and so departed in haste to change his copper and latten pennies into shining gold. Thereat came forth from the inn-porch where they had lain concealed Master Hans Wirth and the Burghmaster, and the fair Margrete, and let loose their prisoned laughter on the free air.

Laughed the Burghmaster with stamps and clappings, and swayings of a ponderous belly that heaved as it would break loose from its moorings and drift derelict adown the broad tide of Mirth. Laughed the honest furrier with deep-throated guffawings and weeping tears of hilarity, and the maiden laughed as maidens use, with quick-dyeing and fading blushes, and dainty eyelids moist with merriment, and a white hand set on either side a delicate panting bosom. And last of all laughed Spurnworld, a short laugh, and one soon over, with a jarring under-note that ran through all the gamut of gaiety. For it is to be noted that those who live but to make others merry, are of all wights in this wild world the saddest and most void of cheer.

Now the Burghmaster made for the time an end of laughing and panted, "'Tis well. Had I corked mirth up one moment longer, the vessel would have burst."

Cried Spurnworld, "How say ye, most worshipful masters? Is not the wager half won? Have I not fed the hungry, namely, myself, by knavery? Have not the sad been made merry, as the mistress here? Have not the deaf been made to hearken, and the lame to walk? And hath not a thief been turned into a saint, witness else yon rotten medlar from the gallows tree?"

Quoth the furrier, " O' my halidom, 'twas a rare conceit ! "

Said the Burghmaster, " Ay, in sooth. But have we burghers o' Wittau cherished a knave in our bosoms for thirty years ? O, the rogue ! Deaf and crippled, forsooth ! Vell Klein shall to the wheel for this, ere the morrow's morn."

Answered the furrier, " I rede ye pause and bethink ye ere ye loose your wrath on him. Meseemeth 'tis better to be cozened by one we know than by one we know not. I' the place of Klein, whom we have fed for thirty years, and who was born and bred i' this our town, shall upstart some blatant villain, with a brazen brow and a false hump, or maybe twain, to mump and mow and diddle honest folk out of their batzen. So let us bear with this rogue i' silence, lest worse befall, even though we hear him bawling for charity on the morrow, and that as loudly as if a' had never walked step or heard sound since his mother stripped his swaddling-clothes."

Said the Burghmaster, " You speak sooth, friend Hans. The rogue must be rebuked, but with discreetness. Ho, ho ! Sir Priest hath gone off with the relic, like a dog to hide a bone."

Said Margrete, " And the poor varlet standeth amazed." And she called to the boor in mellow tones of kindness, saying, " Hither, poor soul, and tremble not. None will hurt thee." Drew nigh the varlet then, under the spell of the white beckoning finger, walking delicately like a cat on walnut shells, and bending at the knees with very reverence and awe. Twice he essayed speech, but dry lips were dumb in spite of moistening. At the third time he broke silence, and cried all quavering, " O, day of wonders ! O, the conjurer ! O, the mighty magician ! Shall I not wend me back with a mouthful of marvels ? ' You are a liar ! ' will the good wife cry. Yet I saw, and with these eyes."

And he spake to Spurnworld tremblingly, saying, "Most awesome sir——"

Answered Spurnworld with a high tone of dignity and lofty port of consequence, "What wouldst of me?"

Answered the poor peasant, "Most diabolical and fearsome conjurer, I am a poor boor, which of Holy Church sought clemency but now, and was refused. Therefore, if Heaven denieth me succour—thou knowest what I would say."

Words died upon his lips, and Spurnworld flashed a piercing look that dazzled him until that he blinked like a barn-owl in strong sunshine. And he laughed, saying, "Ho, ho! So knockest thou at another door? But art prepared to give bargain for bargain, and money's value for money?"

Answered the boor, sweating for very terror, "Truly, I perceive that your honour seeks my soul. But I pray your honour consider that an' if a boor's body be of little more account than the dirt o' the earth, his soul cannot be worth the having. Yet in your ear, I have a mother-i'-law who dwelleth with me and my wife, and hath a tongue would deave Bellzebub himself, and claws to boot. If your honour would take her as security——"

Said Spurnworld, and this after a pause pregnant with weighty consideration, "Hearken! it shall be as thou sayest. Hie thee home and tell thy mother-in-law from me, namely, that in a year and a day shall my messenger be sent for her, unless she repenteth of her misdeeds, and mendeth her curst ways, ere then! The which in all honesty I look to her not to do. So remember—in a year and a day!"

Quoth the boor, "Indeed, your honour may have her when you will!"

But Spurnworld frowned upon him, so that his heart turned to water within him, and said, "Hence, upon this

word! And see that thou look not behind thee as home thou wendest, till that thou art within an hundred yards of thy door, walk—and circumspectly. Then, and not till then, run thou as if the foul fiend was at thy back. And in that moment shall Dame Fortune clout thee between the shoulders. Away!"

In speaking these words those who looked upon him had marked him plunge hand into the furred girdle-pouch wherein the guerdon won of the Burghmaster jingled sides with the crowns cozened out of the priest, and draw therefrom of coins a good fistful. And this he slyly slipped into the ragged hood of the boor, he all unweeting of the act. Then did he smite him very lustily upon the shoulder, and bade him again begone. And the boor spread elbows and made as one about to soar, and then remembering, the command that enjoined soberness upon his movements, dropped leadenly his uplifted arms, and laid sore stress upon the legs that itched to run away with his body eke and carry home the good news ere swift rumour should have spread before him: and so walked as one might pace at his own bier-carrying. And as he went he cried, "O, high joy! O, noble fortune that shall come anon! O, mighty conjurer! O, happy day!"

And he was gone. And Spurnworld sighed and said, "So wend thou homewards, Hope i' thy heart, and Happiness i' thy hood. Look to 't thou fall not into the clutches of Master Gryn again. I wist, my masters, there will be a dame cured of her foul tongue before a year and a day be out. What, lady, you weep at my poor piece of roguery?"

For indeed the maiden sobbed. And she looked up through her tears and smiled like a sunburst through a rain shower, saying, "'Twas but the thought of the poor clown's joy when that he findeth the silver in his hood. And call not a fair and charitable deed by a foul name."

Said Spurnworld, very soberly, "Nay, but knavery it was in very sooth."

And Margrete cried, "Didst trick the priest of his crowns, but all those and more besides thou didst bestow upon his needy debtor. O, strange contrast! When Religion hides the lean cheeks of a miser behind her fair, plump mask, and gentle Christian charity knocks at a poor man's door in the guise of a foul fiend! I know not whether to laugh or weep at it!"

Quoth the good Burghmaster, "Laugh, niece, laugh! Ho, ho! I ha' not shaken these old sides of mine thus for many a year. Truly laughter is the magic charm that reneweth youth. I am a boy again, furrier. A boy again. Thou thyself hast lost something of solid, burgher-like consistency already."

Answered Master Hans Wirth, "Of a truth this merry stranger hath bewitched us. Mind ye the boor's face when that he deemed 'twas the very fiend clapped him o' the shoulder? Ha, ha, ha!"

And they laughed loud and long. Thereat said Spurnworld, "Lo! now hath wisdom revealed herself unto you. Behold, laughter is a coin that the more of it ye spend the more will ye have i' pouch. And the oftener a man laughs, the wiser is he, even as the more gravely and solemnly an ape carrieth his visage so much the more apish doth he appear. Oh, I have breakfasted, dined and supped ere now, lady, and on naught but laughter; I have lain in the fields all night with the stubble for my pillow, and have laughed to see how the winking stars made jest of this sorry little world. Ay, laughed till that I have wept, and then have not been able to weep by reason of my laughter. Laugh, sweet mistress, laugh! Laugh on, worshipful masters! but your laughter will never do more than crack a seam or burst a button, while mine maketh my head to sit so loosely on my shoulders that I fear it

shall one day fall off. Truly my bones are i' danger of the wheel, at this moment of speaking, and all because of my laughter, yet I laugh on."

The merry peal of the maiden ended in a quaver, and she bleached, and murmured, " In danger ? Thou ? And of the wheel ? "

Said the Burghmaster, suddenly sobering, " Is laughter, indeed, so perilous a pastime ? "

Quoth Spurnworld, " I laughed myself into outlawry, but the other day ! "

Said the Burghmaster, " Meseemeth I scent a story here. Pray you sit and tell us, if that you deem us true folk and trustworthy, the adventure of which you speak. We are breathed with merriment."

And the maiden Margrete besought him also, saying, " Prithee, Sir Guest, do as mine uncle says. He is a man of influence in high quarters. If that for a harmless jest you have brought yourself under ban, it may be lifted through his means."

So they sate and Spurnworld leaned against the porch and looked down musingly upon the maiden, to whom the serving wench at sign had brought her spinning-wheel. By now it was the sunset hour, and the golden lord of day was dying in rosy languors upon the bosom of the western sky. The east was swimming in a greenish radiance, and a little pale curled moon floated like a blown feather, over the tops of the distant orchard trees that were all dight in the bridal raiment of Spring. And upon ledge and cornice the doves roosted, and their low murmurings blended with the hum of the maiden's wheel.

XI

And Spurnworld spake and said, " Know that four months since I came in my wanderings into the country of Mecklenburg, even to the town of Lübe."

Repeated the maiden softly, " Of Lübe ? "

Spurnworld answered, " Even so, dear Mistress. And there it chanced that at an inn I fell in company with one of the servants of the Prince of Mecklenburg. And he, seeing that I was in evil case, for truly the tide i' my pouch had ebbed low, did offer me a share in an enterprise with which he was charged, and goodly pay therefor. It chanced, said he, that in the house of a good widow of that city had a fair maid come of late to dwell, the which was niece to the good woman, who was by trade a maker of cheeses. And on this maid had a nobleman, a guest of the Prince's, cast evil eyes."

The maiden wanned, and fingered a trembling lip and sighed : " Evil eyes ! the dear Mother be about us ! Evil eyes in sooth ! "

Spurnworld, heeding not the interruption, continued : " And this lord being determined to possess her, said the servant, he and his fellows had planned to come that very night to the house in a body, and carry her away."

Brake the Burghmaster forth in indignation, crying, " O, the great rogue ! "

Said Spurnworld : " Nay, the lesser. The greater rogue it was that pulled the strings did set the little one to working. As for him, he would in person lead his armed and mounted followers. But first the good widow must be lured from home, so that the nest should be left unguarded. And this I was to do, for a reward, upon which I agreed to 't most heartily."

At this, whispered Margrete in her heart, " One may be mistaken in a man's face, God he wotteth ! Ah, me ! "

Hearing her sigh, Hans Wirth the furrier caught the white hand that glimmered amidst the flax upon the spindle, and crushed in it his gripe a moment, and then dropped it, meeting her fair glance, and turned blood-red to the ear-tips, stammering, " Ay, ay, and thou ? "

Said Spurnworld, "To continue a plain tale. Having seen the rascal under the table, for he did ply me with wine most prodigally, I set forth to do mine errand."

Grunted the Burghmaster in dubious-wise, "Umph! So! And didst thou carry it out?"

Answered Spurnworld, "Yea, after a fashion of my own. For most roguishly did I warn the good widow of the danger that threatened the maid, whose face, indeed, I saw not then, nor ever to my knowledge."

Cried Margrete eagerly, and dropped her spindle, "I might have known it. Go on, go on!"

Said Spurnworld, "And ere another hour had sped, she was in sure hands, and well on her way back to her own country. But needs must that time be gained for the placing of her safely beyond reach of pursuit. So when even fell, I borrowed from the good woman of the house a suit of womanish weeds, and set me in the house chamber and span. Down burst the door and in did rush the enamoured nobleman with his crew of vassals at his back: whereon I shrieked for mercy right shrill and womanly."

Rolled the Burghmaster in his chair and smote his staff upon the floor, and laughed right gleefully. And the furrier sate with knees apart and mouth agape, as if to swallow the teller with the tale, and Margrete stilled the beating of her heart with a hand laid upon her bosom, and through the fast coming twilight gleamed her eyes like two eager stars, as she thrilled out, "More, more! What then befell?"

And Spurnworld said, "That shall ye hear. The poor widow returning, they tied her in a chair. Then did they hoist me up behind the Duke on his horse, binding me to my lordly lover with a leathern girdle, and away multivious. Whereon I did cry 'Alack!' and 'Woe!' and 'Help! for a poor, ravished maid!' and moreover so tightly

hugged my nobleman o' the middle that a' could scarce draw breath. ' Fear not, sweet one ! ' a' saith, and gasped, for I was like to have squeezed him in twain. Whereupon I held the tighter, till that he did bellow most lustily to his fellows to rid him from the clutches of the vixen that clipped him. But ere they could obey, I did cut the band that bound me to him, with my dagger, and twisting him very prettily out of the stirrups, dropped him into a very foul morass that ran by the wayside. Then did I spring to his seat in the saddle, in cavalier fashion though womanly drest, and cried with a loud voice, ' My lord Duke, ere that ye again make free with hood and petticoat that another man's property be, I rede ye make sure what they cover. For an' if 'tis ill to buy a pig in a poke, 'tis worse to deal with a rogue in hood and kirtle. Farewell ! Your body it is mightily bemired, but I doubt your soul is the fouler of the twain.' And while his rascals were laughing, for they rolled in their saddles at the roguery, I put spurs to his fleet courser, and so left the Duke of Lünenberg drinking my health in marsh-water. But he has sworn vengeance against me since, and even now seeketh my life."

Ended he there, and straightway the Burghmaster leapt to his gouty feet and dashed his worshipful hat and staff upon the ground, and cried with a mighty voice : " The Duke of Lünenberg ! Was 't our own Duke, sooth ? O, thou ignoble nobleman, most rightly wast thou served ! And the maid—know ye not who was she ? "

Said Spurnworld, " Nay, I never looked on her, nor heard word concerning, since that day."

Softly as a snowdrift slides down a mountain-side, slid the maiden Margrete from her carven chair, and was at his feet sobbing : " Most dear saviour, look upon her now. She kneels to thank and bless thee, thou noble, good and generous gentleman ! Ah ! didst risk thy life for a poor

maid whom thou hadst never e'en set eyes on! And how shall she and hers repay thee?"

And his hand fell prisoner to soft fine fingers, whose delicate touches sent little thrills along both vein and sinew to the very heart's core: and he looked on her full tenderly and said: "Paid am I and overpaid, in honeyed words. And lo! here on my palm an orient pearl doth rest, dropped by those rich eyes, in priceless token of pure gratitude. Not Cleopatra's gem dissolved more sweetly on the lips of Antony."

Kissed he away the shining drop, and quoth the Burghmaster, "Buss him, wench, buss him! One hearty kiss is worth a dozen of fine phrases. So and roundly! Gentle sir, I am a plain man and cannot speak sweetmeats or shed pearls, but what I have is at your service to the half of it. Wot I that for all your gay mantle and feathered cap, you are not rich in this world's goods. Golden moss gathered never yet rolling stone. But and if ye consent to abide here in this our town of Wittau, of gold and gear ye shall not lack. In truth, the town needs a scholar, and with your merry spice we shall love to be seasoning our solid meat at dull seasons; for virtuous were we, and very wise, but never merry until that ye came. How say ye? Will you strike hands on the bargain?"

Spake Spurnworld, and answered, "Alack! worshipful sir! Here withouten danger may I not tarry Shall have Sir Archer back anon with half an hundred at his heels, I trow. Methinks the dock that shall heal the sting I have given his Highness groweth only i' the shadow of the wheel!—not upon the heath of Lünenberg, but only in the rank grass beneath the gallows-tree!"

Upon this Master Hans Wirth swore a round oath, and cried, "Nay, you are safe here, odds my life on't. The truth shall be published abroad, and you shall see whether the Duke dare snatch the savoury morsel Revenge from the

boiling pot of Wittau withouten offence to 's fingers. The burghers would think o' their own wives and daughters dear, and rise to a man. Ay, ay, we would ding his proud castle about 's ears i' the twirling of a distaff. So stay with us!"

Joined the Burghmaster in and very heartily, "Stay with us."

And Margrete joined in the burden of the tune, low and tenderly, "Stay!"

Looked Spurnworld on her with a troubled brow, saying, "Dost thou bid me?"

And the Burghmaster answered for her, "Ay, she bids thee!" And he beckoned to the furrier, saying, "Come, neighbour Wirth, thou and I and half a score honest heads besides will lay together for the hatching of some plan for the discomfiture of the Duke, and the safety of this our benefactor. Truly these rulers of principalities do look comely throned o' parcel-gilt armchairs, and be-retinued with bullies and boobies, but let them not presume—let them not presume o' their grandeur! For methinks the honest hands that help to set those princely noses aloft i' the air, may also serve to hold them to the grindstone. May the saints pardon me! but there is roguery in the air as thick as pollen i' the blossoming season. First do I help to play a merry jest on Holy Mother Church, and now plotting rebellion like Abaddon's very self. *Culpa mea! Culpa mea!* But we'll go stir up the burghers, for all that. Come, neighbour Hans!"

And Master Heinz Bierdopff went before, stumping gallantly to the tune his stout old heart drummed, and his ruddy dewlaps dyed deep purple with anger, and loyalty outraged, and the furrier rose and followed, saying in his heavy heart, "'Stay,' quoth she! And how tenderly she looked on him! When shall poor I win such a look? Not i' twenty months of hard longing, I trow. Women are kittle cattle!"

And he groaned in spirit, and departed. Sat Margrete in the porch, and Spurnworld leant hard by, and looked upon her. Seemed it to that wight that never ere then had he set eyes on aught so fair and spotless, so holy and so pure. And the springs of his heart were troubled in their long-sealed bed, and laboured to burst upwards in a fountain of tears. Yet knew he that the boiling waters of Repentance were powerless to wash away the blackness of the sad, wild, fierce, desolate Past. And the red sun dipped down to the nether-world, and Evening spread her brooding wings o'er the earth, and the young moon soared up into the amethystine over-blue on the back of a crystal-winged vapour, and poured down on field and forest, hill and heathland, hamlet and town, a blinding flood of silvern light.

XII

As the lights twinkled through the clear horn of the house-windows, and the good folk of Wittau drew stools and settles nearer to warm hearths, and hosen smelt like singeing, Spurnworld moved and brake the spell of silence with poor words, saying, "Dear lady, you are diligent i' labour." For the wheel had begun to hum again, though the sight of the thread that Margrete span would have made a good housewife put up her lip, so uneven was it and knotted.

Started the maiden like one new-roused from dreaming, and made answer, "I am used to do this between whiles. Ill is it living with empty hands!"

Said Spurnworld, "Ill, and ill living with empty heart! Now seem'st thou to my mind like some fair saint, this porch the dusky shrine of thee and the purity base men bow the knee to."

Hung Margrete her head like a dew-laden lily-cup, and

said, " Indeed, 'tis shame to the saints to liken a poor mortal maid to them."

Answered Spurnworld, " Certes, I cry you mercy. But an aureole of moonlight rested o' thine head and did suggest the simile."

Said Margrete, " 'Tis a new moon; a mere bud put forth i' the last nights of April."

Said he: " Ay, to-morrow is May Day."

Said she: " That wot I well—well! Ah, me!"

And he: " Thou didst sigh but now. Dare I ask why?"

She answered, trembling, " Why, I know not! and yet—believe ye, in sooth, that dying folk can read o' the future i' the last hour?"

And Spurnworld said to her, " It may be. The eyes that shall soon be stripped of this veil of flesh, may pierce with premonition into the Future."

And the wheel ceased its broken humming, and the maiden spake in a low, strange, hurried voice, saying, " Hearken. My father, rest his worthy soul!——"

Said Spurnworld, " To that, amen!"

Lifted the maiden a white hand for silence, and said again, " My father! He spake some strange things on his dying bed."

Queried Spurnworld, " Of what nature, these?"

Turned she her face away and so continued, " You must know that this matter of the carrying off of me, his child, did prey sorely on his mind, so that from a gallon or so o' red wine i' the noon, without counting drink at meals, he did come to a poor quart-measure; and by reason, said he, of being no longer anchored down by weight of strong meat and sound liquor, the gout did rise from feet to knees, and up——"

Said Spurnworld, " I wot the way. Till it hit the honest man a foul blow i' the belt, like a dastardly wrestler, and took his breath for ever."

And Margrete said, " Even so, and on his last day he did call for me, being troubled i' his mind. And holding me by the hand, saith, " I have had it revealed to me, my daughter, that when I am gone thy fair peace and sweet security, which have already been threatened by a rascal, shall be more greatly endangered by a rogue. Now a rogue was a thing my father did hold in abhorrence."

Quoth Spurnworld, " So did mine ! "

Said Margrete, " Then a' dozed a little, poor soul, and waking, said, ' Come nearer,' and I came nearer. And he rested his poor head on my bosom."

Murmured Spurnworld, " His head upon thy bosom ! And yet he died ! "

" Waking then he looked in my face, and was for knowing whether I willed him to die i' peace or no ? ' Ay, God he wotteth ! ' quoth I. ' Then swear me an oath,' he saith, ' that—that——' "

Broke the plaintive voice and quavered, and the sweet face hid hot blushes in white hands, while Spurnworld pleaded—

" Prithee, no more, an' if it gives thee pain to recall it ! "

Said she, faintly, " Nay, I will speak it, but pray you turn your face away the while. Said he, ' Swear that thou wilt wed ! ' ' Whom, dear father ? ' said I, and all a' tremble. ' Whom—askest thou ? ' said he. ' Even the first true man whose eyes shall meet with thine when that thou lookest out o' thy window o' May Day morning ! ' "

Said Spurnworld, bridging a gulf of silence with tones as trembling as her own, " O' May Day morning ! And thou didst take the vow ? "

She wept, crying: " Could my daughter's heart refuse to obey him, speaking with 's poor mouth all drawn awry, and the kind face so sorely pinched, that—that had looked on me kindly ever since a babe I was ? Oh, oh, oh ! Ay, I swore, and by Saint Ursula, and the eleven thousand virgins

of Cologne. And afterwards he did seem relieved. Craved he then private word with Master Hans Wirth, and whiles they ran to fetch him the dear soul departed. Oh, oh! Alack! How my heart beateth! Surely the saints will punish me for mine immodesty. Yet in desperate case am I." Which last words came not to the ear of Spurnworld, being spoken under apron-cover.

And Spurnworld let his eyelids close upon the world's blank emptiness a moment or twain, and let the hook-beaked anguish prey upon his heart unchecked a little space. And then he spoke in mellow tones and said, "There will be one happy man, come the morrow's morn! Thou lovest one belike?—forgive me if I seem to pry into thy heart's secrets! Thou hast told him?"

Said she, "Nay—yea—after the roundabout manner o' womenkind."

And Spurnworld said, "May He whom I am not worthy to name bless thee and thy lover, dear mistress! Alack! Heaven hath dealt unevenly with the emmets that swarm o' this earth! 'Tis late, and time I thanked thee for sweet hospitality and bade thee farewell!" Stooped he to knee and lifted the hem of her garment, and thereon laid his lips as reverently as one that kisseth the holy Pyx, and rose, and cried, "Farewell" on the step of going.

But she cried out, "Nay! Dear Mother, show me how to make him understand! Deem ye that it must be farewell, in sooth?"

Answered he, "I so deem. For truly I should not grace thy wedding. A wedding-guest should bring fair gifts, whereof, though with a will to bring them, I have none to offer thee; or at least a smiling face and a happy heart. Think ye a lost, damned soul can stand and smile, who with sore anguish seeth from far the gates of Paradise ope for another, who, but for Heaven's grace, was e'en as lost as he? Again, farewell!"

Rose the maiden up, and stood tall and straight and white in the moonlight, and stretched hands to him and cried, "Yet, bethink thee, within this house, this city, thou art i' safety. Death lurketh in waiting for thee without these walls, he shall smite thee as thou stoopest to drink from the roadside spring, he shall meet thee under the hawthorn hedges and amidst the cowslips i' the meadows. And all because of one who—Go not! I do beseech thee, go not!" Made she an end thereon, sharp sobs cleaving utterance in twain, and sank into her chair all panting and held out trembling, clasped hands to him and mirrored his sorrowful eyes in two clear pools that brimmed and ran over. And again she uttered, "Go not," and the melodious tremble of pure maiden passion thrilled in the chords of her clear voice, and Margrete's secret was made plain to him who hearkened.

And he tossed his arms above his head and cried with a great cry; and fell as though stricken by a burning bolt from the over-blue, prone at the feet of the woman who loved him.

XIII

No word from him but "Pity of God! Thou lovest me! Thou . . .?" over and again.

And she held her hands above the head that rested on her knees, whose yellow locks rude sunlight would have shown sore sprinkled with grey, and yearned over him, and said wistfully, "I have o'erstepped the bound of maidenliness, I trow! Perchance, in time to come, thou wilt remember this and hate me!"

Cried Spurnworld, "I hate thee! thou God's own angel! Thou dost love me? Thou rich, I poor—thou fair and sweet, I marred and bitter—thou virtuous, pure and holy, I—I——"

And he hid his eyes with her garments, and cowered

into her embrace like a hunted thing. Said she, cherishing him very purely and tenderly, "Dear one! Love of my heart! Ah! when that I did first meet thine eyes my heart leapt, as methinks the heart of the earth leapeth when the first strong sunbeam of spring pierceth through her wintry breastplate of chill ice. If I have been over bold I pray thy pardon, but thou wert so proud, so proud in thy poverty, never would'st thou have spoken the first word. And in what sorry plight should poor Margrete have been o' May Day morning!"

And he drew himself from her, and looked upon her strangely, muttering, "'Twas in the wager. A maid should love what erst she did cry 'Out' on. Sue where she scorned——"

She murmured, "Thy brow burneth," and laid a cool palm against its fever.

And he said, "Heed it not. Belike it shall be cold to-morrow!" And again fell to muttering.

Said she, wonderingly, "Whisperest to thyself, and I beside thee?"

Cried he then, "A dove! a dove! to mate with a magpie i' turtle's feathers! Such marriages are not foremade i' Heaven, I trow!" Then he looked upon her less wildly, saying, "Thou saidst but now that thy father dying foretold that thou shouldst be endangered by a rogue?"

And she answered, "Ay!"

Then said Spurnworld, "I am somewhat of a soothsayer. Let me open this white hand and peer into its secrets." And he took her hand and mused a space, and said, "I read i' these lines that thy father spoke truth i' his last hour. Thy peace at this very moment is endangered by a rogue and losel vile! But courage—courage! Ere the morrow's morn shall the rogue be driven forth from this roof with grief and wailing, and the air shall be free for honesty to breathe!"

Now without knowledge of the flying time had they talked, until the short spring night was well nigh spent, and the roof-swallows began to twitter of day-coming. And the maiden hearkened to their chatter, and raised her brow to the chill of the breeze and said, "Dear heart, 'tis late, and in a little time shall the pale dawn climb up the eastern sky and Darkness flee before her. So I must bid thee sweet farewell—till May Day morning, when that we meet to part no more—no more!" And she leant upon his breast within the arms that straitly girdled her, and gazed in his eyes, and murmured, "Art happy as I, in sooth? And dost thou deem that from on high my father looks upon our love?"

Said Spurnworld inwardly, "I well trow not. Else would the good innkeeper lose hold o' Heaven and fall plump upon our heads." Unbound he—and how loth he was to do this God well knoweth!—the sweet arms that clasped him about the neck, and smiled a wan smile, and said, "Sweetheart, ye must to bed, or cheeks as pale as the first snowdrops of the newborn year shall welcome May Day morning. Violet eyes, dewy and fresh as their sweet sister-blooms when that they peep forth from their thick green leaves to greet the rising of the brave bright sun should mirror back those others that shall leap, even with the creaking of thy casement hinge, to meet thine, May Day morning! I'll not sleep, but watch: it may be 'neath thy window. So good-night!" And he drew back from the sweet lips that were so nigh him, and of which his own lips were full fain, saying, "One kiss have I had of these, and more meteth not my deserving. But thy hands I may kiss till—to-morrow!"

Said Margrete, "Till to-morrow," and drooped long lashes over the lovely promise of her passion-brimmed eyes.

Turned she to go within, but he caught her kirtle and

held her a moment, and said in broken tones : " Beloved, when upon some happy eve you sit close-handed with the man you love, and hearken to the beating of the heart that holds such garnered store of love for you, think of one lonely, wandering through the world, chasing the marsh light of ignoble Fame, and steal one sigh from love to pity him ! No more now. Farewell ! Farewell ! "

The dusky doorway swallowed her, and the heavy door closed like the lid of an oaken chest, shutting over a pearl of great price—and the Rogue stood alone without, and in his ear the dying echo of her parting words—

" Farewell—till May Day morning ! "

Now was there brought about in him who stood without the door, a mighty moving of the heart, and the pent-up flood of anguish burst the dam of self-restraint, and carried all before it. Fell Spurnworld on his knee and kissed the threshold that the maiden's foot had pressed, and sobbed aloud, and from eyes that no tear had shed since childhood burst great drops like the forerunners of a thunder-shower, that are followed by no clearing of the sky, nor cooling of the sultry atmosphere.

And he cried aloud in his agony, and said, " O, to be pointed at as the Rogue's wife ! To bear at bosom the Rogue's children ! To pass under gallows and know that there shall thy high heart's lord hang one day. Fear not, it shall never be. So foul a fate is not for thee, Margrete ! Not for thee ! O, me ! this heart of mine it acheth sore ! " And he wept as one who may not be comforted, and from the shedding of such tears may thou and I and those we cherish be defended evermore.

XIV

Now while the Rogue wept, came the honest furrier, Master Hans Wirth, out of the house of the Burghmaster,

wherein he had sate in converse long and late, and a sleepy varlet yawned him forth, and clanked the chain and staple, and went back to his dog's rest with a beggar's blessing. And Master Wirth held his torch aloft, for the way he should go was foul and gloomy, and glanced at the chamber of Margrete as he crossed the Market Place. And in the chamber was a light, and on the pane a clear shadow of a maiden praying with bent head and clasped hands! Thereon said Master Wirth, "Sweet Prudence, you keep late vigil!" And he frowned somewhat, and said: "Now seemeth it to me that as the Burghmaster's door clapt to behind me, another did so, as truly as an echo. Yet who should whisper i' the inn porch so late o' night?" And he heaved a paviour's sigh, and said, "O, Love! Love! Truly is it seely shame that an honest burgher should be so be-rid of a naked urchin! I doubt my suit is an empty one, and if so, cries common sense, 'Quit the field!' I did vow a whopping candle to St. Anthony to rid me o' the mouse that gnaws i' my bosom, but I doubt with but half a mind to 't!"

Passed he on and by the inn porch, still gazing upwards at the lighted window, whither the maiden's candle drew his fluttering night-thoughts and longing aspirations, and so had well-nigh set foot on a man who lay prone on the stones before the door. And that the man was one who had well drunken, he might have guessed, but for the sound of weeping. And he stooped, and smote him on the shoulder and cried, "What's here, a' heart?"

And Spurnworld cried, "Broken!"

And the furrier knew him as he rose, and said bitterly, "How now? Is 't thou? Do men shed tears?"

Answered Spurnworld, "Yea, for laughter! Come, weep with me!"

Replied the furrier, roughly, "I am in no mood for merriment. Let us speak as men. Doth the maid therein

favour you?" For suspicion had wakened in his honest bosom, and the milk of his nature was turned to gall.

Said Spurnworld, "Yea! As much as a maid may favour a man."

Cried the furrier, "Out, braggart!"

Upon this said Spurnworld, "Brag filleth many a mouth that else would go empty. But an' if ye question whether this maiden hath any love towards the thing I am, know that she did spit upon my very calling awhile agone!"

Said the furrier, with all rancour gone, "Shame on her then, to fleer on one to whom she oweth gratitude! Said she aught else?"

Answered Spurnworld, "This further. That she saw in me naught that any true maid might love."

Cried the furrier, heartily, "Give me thy hand! I ha' borne thee ill will and do grieve for it. Yet the tender passion maketh men inhuman betimes. And I love her my whole heartful, and have served for her, though she knows it not, as long as Jacob did for Rachel. For her father as good as gave me his word, that an' if she would have me, I should have her. Then, before I had screwed my courage up to plain speaking, a' died: though I bear him no ill will for it."

Then said Spurnworld, "Behold, and hearken to a secret thing. Before that the good man died a' made the maid swear eleven thousand oaths and one over, that she would marry——"

Cried the furrier, "Me?" and Hope plucked him to very tip-toe.

Answered Spurnworld, "Nay, not thou, but the first unwedded he-she should look between the eyes when that she peeped from her casement o' May Day morning!"

Growled the furrier, "Out on the old winebibber!"

Said Spurnworld, "And thenceforward, being *in extremis*, a' called for thee; doubtless to confide to thee the secret

whereby thou shouldst win her. But the death-rattle came ere thou!"

Mused the furrier, "Ay, ay; was ever a worthy man, God rest him! Art swearing certain that this is sooth?"

Said Spurnworld, wearily, "I lie not! Put it to the test. Sleep on yonder bench under the maid's window instead o' thine own bachelor bed-tester. The night-air can bring no chill to an heart that is warm with hope. For me, I fare forth, with the morning."

Asked the furrier, "Whither wendest thou?"

And Spurnworld answered, "Whither Fate will! When we meet at the Day o' Judgment, should any that stand by cry 'Rogue!' upon me, bear thou witness whether I have used thee honestly or no!"

Said the furrier earnestly, "I will, my hand on't! But we had looked to have you stay among us."

Said Spurnworld, "That may not be." And they twain clasped hands, and looked one another in the eyes a little space. And Spurnworld said, "One thing more! 'Tis a pure heart, see that thou wrong it never!"

Said the furrier, "May I die a Rogue's death else."

Said Spurnworld, and took from him the torch whose flame was fast waning, "Give us thy candle and get thee to bed then!" And the furrier stretched limbs upon the rude oaken bench that stood beneath the window of the gable-chamber. And in the branches of the cherry-tree that climbed about the maiden's casement, a merle sat, the merry robber with the golden bill! Too full of song was he to sleep, I wot, and so preened his swart plumage against the day-breaking, and twittered of the promise of sweet plunder to be got in June. Whiles the bird sang and the furrier nodded, Spurnworld drew from his pouch a lump of fair red pigment and, mounting on a stool, limned very swiftly above the door of the inn a quaint device

of a jester in cap and bells, spurning with contemptuous toe a globe of the Earth, and under it the legend written—

"I Spurn the World."

And between two blinks the furrier was ware of him moving behind the trellis-work and quoth he, drowsily—

"Joy is wakeful, I trow. What write ye there, comrade?"

And Spurnworld answered, "Dear comrade, 'tis the custom when that any noble guest have sojourned at an inn, for him to leave his armories behind him o' the wall, whether or no he leave any gold i' the host's coffer. I am not great, nor have I heraldic bearings, but this one device, which now I limn with red pigment."

Saith the furrier, sleepily, "I am curious to see it."

Said Spurnworld, "Nay, tarry thou till the light be fair." And he dashed down the torch by whose flame he had wrought, and leapt after, and trod upon the smouldering embers.

As the last spark died, he turned and looked towards the bench. Lo! the furrier had yielded to the spell of Our Lady of Drowsihead, and hard as the bed was, slept he soundly, and with calm brow and open palms as peaceful as those of a yearling babe.

And Spurnworld said, "Ho, ho! Sound and fast art thou! Sleep, honest lover, and dream of May Day morn!" Then looked he about him, and sure enough in the far east the lovely day was breaking and the steep heatherlands were gilded with the first faint ray of the sun. And he said, "Dawn breaks, I must away! For Margrete, the sign over the door shall speak all that is needful. She must know 'twas a rogue stole the maid's heart, if she is to hate me. For hate me she must, there should be no pining! Married shalt thou be and happy in a true man's

troth. God keep thee ever white, fair soul! Have children about thy knees—bring them up to shun roguery. But such curd thy blood should never run to! For but once in a way is your rogue born, your true rogue that will endure hunger and cold, heat and drought, grief and pain, stripes and scathe, and think all well bought at the price of roguery." And he wept bitter tears, and through them was ware of the Burghmaster's worshipful hat lying where its wearer had forgotten it, on the cold stone pearled with the night's dew. And he laughed aloud and lifted it and twirled it on his hand, saying, " This worshipful hat, it is mine, Sir Burghmaster, and fairly won i' the wager. The rogue priest oweth me a cassock. The maid did pay me in advance and beforehand. Ho! ho! ho!" Laughed he again and said, " O' my halidom! a right merry game have I played i' this town, and won, and yet lost something that I never knew I had before! Now fare I forth into the fields to meet with Death. I had as lief show him my heavy heart as my light heels, I trow." And he groaned in spirit and sobbed sorely and said, " Was there a rogue which was to wed a fair and honest maiden! And a' did so love roguery, that o' the wedding morn a' played a trick upon himself. Set a true man in's own place to have and to hold his heart's idol forever. Ho! ho! ho! Oh! oh! oh! Then fared forth into the wide world laughing, Ho! ho! ho! because that he had wrought a merry piece of Roguery, and weeping, Oh! oh! oh! because his heart was broken!"

And he cast his cloak about him, and ran from that place. And as he ran he laughed and wept together so that the salt tears rolled down in the curves and wrinkles of mad merriment instead of coursing through the down-drawn channels of grief. Wildly he sped, but halted when he had gone a little way, and turned for one last look at the grave where Hope and Love with dear Desire lay dead together.

And the broad sun laughed out upon the merry First of May, and the merle in the blossoming branches of the cherry-tree tuned up his sweet pipe in a jubilant hymn of praise. Clicked the hasp of the maiden's casement, and the sound smote the bonds of sleep from the lover who couched below. Rose he up straightway and knelt with one knee on the bench, waiting with yearning eyes and beating bosom for the uprising of his sun of joy. Thereat the Rogue yelled shrilly, as one whose heart is split with a knife-stroke, and tore his hair, and fled away into the golden light of morning.

XV

Now without the two gates of Wittau were two bands of archers posted, east and west, some fifty stalwart and bearded men with the sweat of the night march scarce dried upon the brows their steel-lined bonnets banded, and the stain and rust of the night-dews upon scarlet-sleeved jerkins and baldrics of buff, and steel breastplates and the iron toeplates of their leathern shoon. Among them that gathered at the eastern gate was a short, lean man wearing the cognizance of the princely House of Mecklenburgh. At the head of this meinie was the swart-visaged Captain, Ellmer. Silently they waited, until the day-brow lifted, and the golden eye of the sun looked out upon the world. And but a little space after came the clanking of chains and the groaning of a pulley and the complaining of iron bolts in time-worn grooves of rock, and the gates of Wittau opened as the drawbridge sank noiseless down. Came then the sound of quick, unsteady footsteps, thudding on echoing stone and dull timber, and came running forth from Wittau a man whose head was muffled in a gay mantle embroidered and furred. And as he ran he laughed and wept, and this so fearsomely that those who would have laid hold upon his garments stayed their hands

and fell back, and he passed through them and fled away. Yet the mantle stayed in the hands of the wolf-mouthed varlet of the House of Mecklenburg who, bolder than the rest, had striven to grasp the garment of him who fled. And seeing now by dayshine the fashion of them revealed, he cried aloud, "Ho, ye! the quarry escapes!" Thereupon dropping the mantle, he snatched the steel-shod arbalast from an archer that stood near, and clapped it to shoulder in a twinkling and loosed a swift, singing bolt and a grim curse together. And the bolt sped to its mark unerring, so that he who fled was pierced betwixt the shoulder blades. Yelled he shrilly as at the bite of Death's fangs upon his heel, and leapt round and faced his mustered enemies with starting eyeballs and lips that frothed bloody defiance. And he shook his clenched hand high and cried to him that stood in the forefront of the throng: "An ill deed well done, Verlayn! Commend me to my father the Prince, and say thou that the death he dooms me is better than the life that he begat!" More words might those writhen lips have uttered, but that the black-browed Ellmer signed to shoot, and a second bolt crashed through breast-bone and so home, and as Spurnworld screamed again, a jet of clear blood spurted from his mouth and he fell upon his face amongst the cowslips and stirred not again.

So the Duke's men bore the body of the Rogue into Wittau, while the Prince's men sped away with bloody news in mouth and black guilt at heart, through the spring meadows; and that piteous thing, of life now all bereft, the jeering archers hung upon the great wheel that stood behind the Town Hall in what is known as the Lesser Market, and went their ways also. Methinks it hung there, staring with wide blind eyeballs up to the pure eternal blue, an hour ere 'twas found by the burghers and townsfolk, and those old and young who rose early for

the May games. Until nightfall there it stayed, and no man for fear of the Duke's vengeance might lay an hand upon it. But ere dawn of the next day the body was gone, and whose the hand that washed and straiked it and composed the stiffened limbs and closed those blind wide hawk's eyes, and brake the green turf in a solitary corner of the kirkyard for its resting-place, none ever knew, nor was the place of its lying ever known, so featly was the task completed. But at the Day of Doom and Judgment it shall be known, for upon that day shall no secret thing remain concealed. Here endeth the tale, then, with this rhyme of Roguery which some say was made by Spurnworld, King and master of all rogues—and some say came from a lesser brain and a meaner hand—

"As the Wind blows, so the reeds bend,
As the Tale tells, so doth it end,
As the Tree falls, so must it lie,
As the World wags, we live and we die :
New corpses to clay—new children to cry—
Roguery, Roguery, Roguery ! "

A SPEAKING LIKENESS

I

In the month of June, in the year 1792, in the city of Paris, a young girl stood dreaming in a garret before a roughly sketched model in clay. The girl was slim and pale and brown-haired, with a wide white brow and gentle hazel eyes. Her gown was of common drugget, partly covered by a workman's blouse of blue, a black ribbon confined her pretty curling hair, and the garret contained little besides herself, her clay model, some plaster casts, an easel and portfolio, a pallet bed, a stool or two, one armchair, and a little hair trunk, with a card tacked upon it, bearing her address in slim ink characters—

Mlle. Louison Chabray,
worker in sculpture,
15 *Rue des Ferrailleurs*,
Quartier Saint-Eustache,
Paris.

Mlle. Louison, worker in sculpture, heaved a little impatient sigh, and tapped her slight foot, neatly shod with a steel-buckled shoe, upon the bare floor, as the strokes sounded from a neighbouring steeple.

"Théroigne is late again. And she promised to be punctual to-day. How I shall scold her when she comes! Meanwhile one must break one's fast."

And Louison took from a cupboard a hunch of black

bread, coarse, sour-smelling, and heavy, and began to eat. The poorest, thinnest wine at three sous the measure was beyond her means, but she had a porringer of skim milk, and in that she dipped the hard black bread. As the hunch rapidly diminished, and a bright-eyed mouse peeped out of a hole by the narrow fireplace, wondering when his daily portion of crumbs would be scattered from the lap of Louison's blouse upon the hearthstone, there came a step upon the rickety boards of the landing, and a loud rap at the garret door.

" Théroigne ! " cried Louison, and ran to unbolt.

But the visitor revealed upon the threshold was a man, broad-shouldered, bow-legged, and meanly dressed in brown, with a swollen cheek, which gave to his coarse-featured countenance, illuminated with a pair of bright grey eyes, an oddly grotesque air. He removed his hat, a three-cornered beaver, ornamented with a tricolour cockade, and Louison cried out in delight—

" Why, Monsieur David ! "

" Citizen David, you must say now, Citizeness Louison," corrected the man in brown. He marched in uninvited, moving his stout bow-legs, clad in thick stockings of grey ribbed yarn, and his thick, clumsy feet shod with steel-buckled shoes of horse leather, briskly over Louison's threshold, and went straight to the clay model. " All Friends of Freedom should thus address and be addressed."

" Alas ! Monsieur—Citizen, I mean—I am too small and insignificant and poor to own to so grand a title," said the girl, shaking her little head.

" Who has not known what it is to be weak, helpless and oppressed," said Citizen David, " cannot be a friend to Freedom."

" But Monseigneur the King wears the tricolour cockade, they say, and has sworn to be true to the people."

" Put not your faith in kings or in nobles, *petite*," said

Citizen David, "for their oaths are wind, and their colours change with the times, and their friendship and favour are the smiling mask of hate. Shall I tell you what a wealthy Seigneur's conversion to the creed of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity has done for the people of Quincey, a village near Vesoul? Last week, he, too, under a certain amount of pressure, mounted the tricolour cockade. He threw open the gates of his *château* and came out among the famishing peasants and invited them in to a banquet of Brotherhood. Tables were spread, the guests sat down; every room was crowded, and they pledged the toast of Universal Brotherhood in the best wine M. de Chemmay's cellars contained. But M. de Chemmay had gone out when the feasting was at its height and"—the thick cheeks of Citizen David grew purple, and his voice sank to a guttural whisper—"and he locked the great doors after him, having previously made his arrangements in the cellars that were full of gunpowder—you understand?"

"He killed the people?" Louison asked, with pale cheeks and horrified eyes.

"He blew up the *château* and the peasants, and then escaped to England," said Citizen David, with a mocking laugh.

"*Mort de ma vie!* I should have liked to paint him, with his smouldering fuse, amongst his powder barrels. But I think I shall wait. The bigger a subject is, the grander. The more comprehensive the crime, the more sublime the criminal. I shall wait until the baker blows up the bread shop—until the son of St. Louis sets fire to France." His negroid lips rolled back from his strong, square teeth. "That will be a subject worthy of the brush of David, Citizeness Louison," he said, with his guttural laugh.

"You think—you think the King would fly and leave us?" cried the young girl, with startled eyes.

"I would not trust him too far," said David, with a shrug. "But he must first set light to the fuse, and then—*Mordieu!* who knows? Perhaps he will ascend to the skies in a chariot of flame. Do you not think that would be a fine subject for a picture?" He did not wait for the girl's reply, but began to walk round and about her model, his plump red hands crossed behind him, rolling his heavy square head, and pursing his thick lips, and measuring the roughly indicated figure with a critical eye. "That left shoulder, Citizeness, is out of proportion. Look you, the great divisions are the same in female forms as in those of the male, but there is only to be counted in the female six parts from one shoulder to the other, and five parts at the waist. Moreover, your anatomy is at fault——"

"Ah, Monsieur David! I feared as much," sighed Louison; "but the schools of anatomy are open only to men, and those alone who are studying for the medical profession."

"There is a skeleton at my studio; you are at liberty to come and work from it," said the artist kindly. "Stay, though; I will lend it you. It shall be sent here to-night."

"Oh, Monsieur—Citizen, I mean!" gasped Louison, "you are too good. But—a skeleton—here—in this room, where I live and sleep! I should die of it." Her lovely eyes dilated, she clasped her small hands with a pretty gesture of entreaty. "Do not send it, I beg of you!"

"Well, well! I will not send it," said David. "But who would be a sculptor, Citizeness, that one must make friends with skeletons, and must not even shrink from the scalpel. Who would justly render the glorious human form must dive deep into its secrets, must lift the veil of flesh and study the marvellous framework that supports it, and the astonishing mechanism that conveys the effluence of vitality to the limbs and members. I grant you that

Art is hampered by the obstacles that are placed in the path of the artist who would prepare himself by anatomical study and research for the artistic career. But a day will come, Citizeness Louison, when the artist will not be thus hampered, and immortal works will be born of the knowledge that is free to all. Meanwhile, I wait, and grind red!"

Louison began to laugh.

"You always say the same thing, Monsieur David. Do you, then, grind no other colour than red?"

"It is a good colour, Citizeness," said the painter. "One touch of it lights up a landscape or enlivens the drapery in a composition of figures. The blind have likened it to the sound of a trumpet." His pale, strange eyes looked from beneath their shaggy brows past Louison and at the garret wall, and he raised his right hand as though pointing to something that he saw beyond and through the barrier. "That is the red I grind; I, and my comrades."

"The other painters, Monsieur?"

"The other painters, Mademoiselle Louison," said David, "or patriots, call them what you will. There is one Robespierre, a bilious fellow, but an excellent grinder; there are Rabaut and Camille Desmoulins, Saint Just and Danton, with some two hundred other grinders all at work. Judge if there will be sufficient red in France when these adepts mingle carmine and vermilion and madder—and grind. The colour will be as the sound of a trumpet, Citizeness Louison, and the blindest aristocrat will know as much!"

"Ah, Citizen David, you say things that are too hard for me to understand," said the girl. "But you are as kind to me as though you were my uncle or my father, and I am grateful."

"Child," said the clumsy man, "I am neither your

uncle nor your father, but a man without kindred who lives for Art alone. Yet do not cease to be grateful. Gratitude is one of the most beautiful emotions the human face can express. And—get a model to sit for this figure——I mean with good shoulders."

"Théroigne had promised," said Louison, with a grieved sigh, "but she has broken her word."

"*Tiens!* Citizeness Louison," said a full, mellow voice at the door; "Théroigne is late, to be sure, but she has kept her word."

"Oh, Théroigne!" cried the girl in delight, as she threw her arms about the neck of the new-comer, a tall, black-haired, rather bold and fierce-eyed woman of thirty-five.

David whistled, thrusting his gross hands into his deep coat pockets as he eyed the pair.

"The Citizeness's departed mother and myself were foster-sisters, Citizen David," said Théroigne, with a defiant eye flash. "Like the Citizeness, I am of Luxembourg; and when I first saw her here in Paris I thought I looked upon a ghost." She was about to cross herself, but stopped in the act. "The likeness was so striking."

"And from thenceforth Mademoiselle has profited by your counsel and companionship?" said the painter, rubbing his chin. Over Louison's brown head Théroigne sent another defiant glance at him. But his tone and the look in his cold steely eyes had pierced to the quick. The woman was livid to the lips. As David took his leave she followed him out upon the landing, shutting the door.

"Citizen!"

The burly painter looked back, his foot upon the stair

"Well, *ma belle?*"

The hand of Théroigne was at her bosom.

"Citizen David, the child knows nothing. There never was a creature more innocent." She breathed roughly,

and pulled at a band of velvet that was about her handsome throat. "No harm shall come to her. By Our Lady, I swear it!"

"Swear by the Commune, Citizeness, and the New Era," said David. "But, oaths or none, I credit you. I know love as an artist, theoretically, and the look of it is in your eyes."

"I would shed my blood for her," said the woman harshly; "though a bit of bread is the most that she will take of me. She lives on a crumb, and dreams of Art."

"Let her dream," said David, "and waken free. Meanwhile, do not slacken in your efforts for the Republic. Your eyes and your tongue have made patriots by the score, and your fingers have plucked aristocrats before now as bare as autumn geese. *Bon jour*, Citizeness!"

And the gross fat man went down the rickety stairs plucking at his swollen cheek, and thinking of the day when enough red should be ground to paint the whole of France, while Théroigne returned to Louison.

"My pretty bird, my darling," said the woman, sitting in the garret's one chair, the girl upon her knees; "do not go out into the streets to-day. Do not, even if you hear a noise, look out of your window, and keep the door fast barred within, and open to none save me. Promise me this, child of my foster-sister—darling of my heart!"

"I promise," said Louison, her head upon the other's shoulder, her little clay-smeared hand clasped in Théroigne's, "if you will sit to me for my Athène, as you promised."

"For half an hour," Théroigne agreed, kissing the wavy brown hair. "Then I must go."

"You have work?" asked Louison, and over the face that bent above hers a dark flush of crimson spread.

"In my way I work," said Théroigne shortly, "and for France." The triple tap of a drumstick upon tightened

parchment coming from the street below seemed to echo, "and for France."

"For France? How for France?" the girl asked curiously.

"Child," said the woman, "you mould bodies. There are others who work upon minds and hearts."

"How that drum beats!" said Louison, rising. "Somewhere in the Quartier. The sound comes from the guard-house."

Théroigne glanced towards the window, and as the restless dub-a-dub changed to a long roll, she started to her feet, and ran to the window. Louison was already there.

"Look, Théroigne, at the crowds of women," she cried. "Thousands of them, all of the markets, all armed with pikes and staves. They have lowered a street lantern. What are they doing with the rope? Oh! Théroigne, they have a prisoner. They mean to hang him. The rope is round his neck! . . . Save! Help!"

But Théroigne's hand was on the girl's mouth. With irresistible strength she forced her to her knees. "Down! Do not let your face be seen. The man is a baker, who used short weights. They make an example of the traitor as a warning. For your life be quiet. The women are mad with hunger and waiting, and——"

A hollow roar came up from the surging street below. The struggling body of the baker had been hoisted aloft by stout arms. For a moment the figure spun, hideously active; then the rope broke. He fell, and a horrible scream of laughter went up from a thousand throats. And the sound of the drum came nearer, and with it the rattle of wheels.

"What is it they cry?" gasped Louison, with chattering teeth, clinging to the folds of Théroigne's woollen gown.

"To Versailles!" returned the woman, with a fierce smile. "And it is time. We shall the sooner have a Republic. Ah, they have seen me. I must go."

As though one impulse set them up, a hundred throats and a hundred tongues vociferated the name of Théroigne.

"Théroigne! What, up there? *Holà!* Citizeness. Come down, come down, France calls! Muster the women, rally the Sisters of Liberty! Hurry, Théroigne! Fie, does she delay? She has a lover up there—an aristocrat. Drag them down, drag them down together! To the lantern!" Thus shrieked the raving Furies in the thronged street, in the courtyard, surging with snaky-locked Medusa heads and brandished weapons. And axes broke in the lower door, and wooden shoes clattered on the stairs, and they were coming . . .

"It is too late to hide. Keep close to me and do not anger them!" Théroigne rapidly unbolted the garret door, retreated to the middle of the room, and threw an arm about the shrinking figure of Louison, facing the fierce intruders with a laugh that rang out loud and clear, and reckless above their harsher outcries.

"So! You have found me, Sisters of Liberty—with my aristocrat lover! Behold him!" She thrust the trembling girl forward for inspection, and a hoarse guffaw of laughter answered her own loud peal. "'Tis a little Citizeness as weary of stinking black bread, as hollow from the want of even that, as we! See, here in her garret she moulds clay figures and dreams of freedom!" She pointed to the roughed-out clay of the Athène. "There is a Goddess of Liberty. See her spear and shield and breastplate! When it is done it shall be set up in the Place of the Bastille and decked with the tricolour. And there the child shall make a group, 'The Genius of Liberty Giving Bread to France.' And the Genius of Liberty, my sisters, shall be a woman! The woman who, seeing her country about to perish of

famine, gathered together the mothers, the sisters, the daughters, and the wives of France, and led them to Versailles ! "

The rude, effective eloquence, the strong, clear voice turned the swaying spirit of the crowd, and a Babel of approving yells urged the speaker to go on.

" The Council of Three Hundred have assembled ! " cried Théroigne ; " all the committees are in activity, despatches are being dictated for Versailles. True, but what is born of this but words, and words ? Too long the Government of France has fed its people upon words. We are desperate, my women, because those we love are dying of hunger, therefore it is time for us to move in the matter. The source of the mischief is at Versailles. We must go and seek the King and bring him back to Paris," she cried, and a roar of assent went up from those about her. " The National Guard," she went on, " the Grenadiers of the Centre, are about the King. They cannot turn their bayonets against women, for of women they were born. Then let us to Versailles ! Forward, and I will lead you. Give this child a drum, and she shall lead you too ! "

There was a fierce flash of teeth and eyes from all those listening faces. The shout that went up was echoed on the staircase and in the courtyard and street. The sound of the drum broke out afresh. It beat a maddening peal, and the tide of frantic, dishevelled, gaunt and ragged humanity that rolled down the stair and through the courtyard and out into the Quartier St. Eustache swept with it the fierce, disdainful figure of the wild-eyed, black-locked Théroigne and the slight, trembling shape of Louison clinging to the woman's side.

" To Versailles ! To Versailles ! "

The drum, multiplied by seven, beat to some purpose. To eight pieces of artillery seized on the Place de Grèv

were harnessed teams of four stout cart-horses apiece, and, mustered into some sort of order, armed with muskets and pikes, pitchforks and besoms, the army of women marched towards Versailles. Rain fell; the daisies and bluebells that bordered the country roads were trodden into the mire; here and there a gaunt creature fell, swooning or dying, and was trodden with them, before the last hill-top was reached, and Versailles and the Royal Château lay outspread before those haggard women's eyes. Three hundred feet wide, the great avenue of elms received the drenched and tattered army, and they advanced in three irregular columns under the pouring rain, shouting—

"Long live the King!" and "Bread! Bread! Bread!" and brandishing their rusty swords, their jagged pikes, their iron-shod cudgels, clubs and pickaxes, as though they meant to have it, and blood to wash it down.

"See, General Théroigne, the Royal Bodyguards are drawn up in front of the palace gates, and the red-coated Swiss are behind them," a draggled woman cried, pointing with one lean, emaciated hand, and rolling her gaunt eyes as she clutched the shoulder of the leader.

"And within, all the ministers, Saint Priest, Lamentation Pompignan, and all the rest are assembled with Citizen Necker!" Théroigne showed her gleaming teeth in a fierce laugh. "We have given them plenty to discuss, Citizeness Eloise. Halt the columns here upon the Esplanade!" she cried, and the order was repeated and obeyed. "Louison, *ma mie*, remain with the main body. Volunteers! Give me forty buxom volunteers to deal with these dragoons. Babette! Marie! Lucie! Suzanne! Girls, follow me."

And Théroigne and her sisterhood, bright-eyed, wild-locked and wanton-mouthed as their leader, launched themselves upon the Bodyguard.

"Dragoons, if you are worthy of the name of soldiers

of France, you will respect patriot women. Embrace us, *mes braves ;* we were prettier to see if we were better fed, but let the Baker throw the grain-storehouses open to the public and we shall soon grow plump again. Meanwhile, embrace us, in the name of France ! "

And they hugged the rough troopers with right good will, standing upon their boot-toes to reach the bronzed faces under the nodding plumes.

" Close the ranks ! " cried the commanding officer. " Drive back those women, or ride them down ! " But a sullen growl of dissent came back from the men, amidst a show of knives from the women, and Théroigne laughed in the face of M. le Colonel, and dropped him a mocking curtsey.

" Give an order that will be obeyed, *mon beau Seigneur*, or issue none ! Ha ! Sisters, by the Hope of France ! the gates are opening."

They were, in fact. A powdered usher in the palace livery came through the mustered companies of red-coated Swiss with a message from the King.

" What do we want ? his Majesty asks." Théroigne tossed her wild head, bound with a scarlet handkerchief, and stuck her arms akimbo. " Bread, and speech with him. Admission for a deputation of twelve women, and a leader, who shall speak for us and France. The members of the National Assembly are even now within the Palace ! Do we not know it ? There is President Mounier on the terrace with the deputies. Hold, Citizen President ! Speak a word for the daughters of France ! "

Whom President Mounier, thus appealed to, befriended.

Thus it came about how that twelve women were admitted to the Royal presence. Ten were gaunt, squalid, ragged viragoes, the eleventh was Théroigne, the twelfth Louison Chabray, worker in sculpture.

" Oh Théroigne," she whispered, clinging to her pro-

tectress's hand, as they moved in the wake of a gilded Marshal of the Chambers over the inlaid pavements of the marble court, and climbed the stately staircase that led to the Royal apartments, "do you think we shall be blown to atoms like those peasants of Quincey, near Vesoul?"

Théroigne laughed bitterly.

"Little fool! could all the hungry people in France be packed beneath this roof with us, to fire the gunpowder in the cellars of Versailles might pay. But think you how many thousands we have left outside; and how many thousands of thousands are waiting the signal to march. We are safe—because it is not worth while. Now, hold up that pretty head of yours, step out with those slim feet, for in a minute we shall be in the presence of the King."

Louison, dizzy with fright, could afterwards recall a long room, with ceiling and wall of gilded mirrors. She trod upon pale blue plush; curtains of silver damask hung by the high windows. There was a Royal daïs, canopied with pale blue; upon it two gilded chairs, in these a stout, phlegmatic gentleman in a brown peruke, and a fair, splendid lady, lofty and proud, who, it seemed to Louison, looked on her with a mingling of pity and of dread.

"My daughters," said the King, rising, "why have you come here?"

And Théroigne replied—

"Sire, because here, and nowhere else in the world, is bread baked for us. Alas! while National Assemblies lay down laws for the regeneration of France, France is starving. The very stones of Paris, did they yield nourishment, would be plucked up for food."

Then all the women chorused lamentably—

"Oh, Sire, return to Paris!"

"Is it so much desired?" the King said doubtfully.

One of the viragoes behind Louison gave her a thrust between the shoulders.

"Tell him, then." And the King looked gravely at the pale young girl, who faltered—

"Ah, Sire, all the people wish it so. They cry upon you night and day."

She staggered, and would have fallen forwards, but the King stretched out his arms and received the fainting girl.

"Pardon, pardon!" she stammered.

"My child," said Louis, "do not apologise. It was well worth the trouble." He kissed the girl's pale cheek. 'Be comforted. Provisions shall be sent to Paris, if provisions are in the world. None shall lack bread, and if the Parisians desire their King, why, they shall have him too!"

"Long live the King!" shrieked a shrill voice, and other voices took up the cry. Then the King dismissed the deputation, and the deputation found themselves outside the gates, in the pouring rain and weltering mud, in a very little time. and an ear-splitting yell went out from ten thousand throats at the sight of them.

"Good news? You have seen Louis? Women, they have seen Louis, and have been graciously received. Long live the King, long live the Queen, long live the Royal Family, long live everybody and everything! The Baker has promised bread. *Dame!* yes, but where is this bread? Oh, God of Heaven! where is this bread? Are we to be fed with words—with air? Sisters, mothers of France, we have been deceived. The delegates have been corrupted—bribed! Search them for Austrian gold. First the girl whom Louis kissed; the sly, smooth-skinned hussy with the white face."

They shrieked curses in Louison's ears; they foiled their own vengeance, as she cowered in the bosom of Théroigne, by clawing at and striking each other. Breathless, bruised and bleeding, her poor gown torn to ribbons

on her back, Louison was wrenched from Théroigne's fierce, despairing clutches. "To the lantern!" they cried, and one virago, whipping off a stout yarn garter, had it round the girl's slim neck in an instant, when there came a surging movement in the crowd, a gleam of steel and scarlet, and tossing horses' crests above the brandished arms and ugly weapons; and Louison was snatched from the greedy claws of her would-be executioners by the strong arm of one of the Bodyguard. She felt the heaving withers of the horse beneath her, she was aware of support and of protection, a pair of frank blue eyes looked into her own, and then, from terror and exhaustion, she swooned away in the arms of the young officer.

II

A few days later, as Louison Chabray stood working in her garret, the well-known knock of David sounded upon the panel of the door. After a moment's delay the door was unlocked, and the artist, entering, gave his student "Good-morning."

"Why, how is this?" He rolled his head, and pouted his thick lips, surveying the work of the shy young artist with evident surprise. "A portrait bust—and of an officer of the King's Bodyguard!"

"It is not a portrait, Citizen David," said Louison, looking down. "It is—from memory only."

"You are to be congratulated, Citizeness," said the great artist. "There are faults, of course, but the work has spirit. By the way, you played a public part the other day at Versailles, were embraced by Holofernes, and nearly fell a victim to the Judiths of the Halles."

"Oh, Monsieur, it was terrible," said the girl, trembling. "Had not the young officer spurred his horse into the crowd and snatched me from their hands——"

David followed her glance, and knew that the unfinished bust must be a portrait of her rescuer. He thrust his hands into his pockets, and looked down, his double chin bulging over his plain cravat.

"You had swung in a blue yarn garter from one of the elms of Versailles, despite all the eloquence of Mademoiselle Théroigne."

"She loves me, Monsieur," said Louison. "Judge of it. For the last three nights she has slept upon the landing outside this door, wrapped in a watchman's cloak, to guard me. I begged her to share my bed—at any rate to sleep within the room, but she only shook her head. If she were my mother herself she could not love me more, Monsieur David."

"Sleep safe under her guardianship, Citizeness Louison," said the painter. "We have abolished the Saints by an Act of the National Convention, so I will not commend you to them. And—here is an illustrated work upon Anatomy which you will do well to study. Fear not to make your eyes acquainted with these plates; they will look upon sights more alarming before we date our letters 'The First Year of the Equality of Man.'" He handed Louison the book. "I hear from Théroigne," he said, "that you were afraid Versailles would be blown up, deputation and National Assembly, Swiss, Bodyguards, King, and all."

"I was foolish," said the girl; "but I thought of those peasants of Quincey." She shuddered and grew pale.

"Their murderer has not fled to England, after all," said David roughly. "He escaped to Versailles and is enrolled, under a false name, in the Royal Bodyguard. His own name is too well known. The people of France will not forget De Chemmay in a hurry, and one day they will make him remember the peasants of Quincey. He

is already condemned by the National Assembly Are you cold ? "

" Oh no, thanks, Citizen ! "

" You have a chill, it may be, from working too long at the wet clay," said David. " Rest, Mademoiselle, and be well to-morrow. Remember, I have said that you will be a sculptor one day. It is astonishing that you should have modelled that bust from memory only ! "

And the artist took his leave. Then, all trembling, Louison re-locked the door and opened a cupboard, and out stepped a handsome young man in puce-coloured mufti. He was very pale, but his blue eyes were smiling.

" I did well, it seems, to step into the cupboard," he said, with a shrug.

" Oh, Monseigneur, if you had not ! " Louison said, trembling.

" So you knew that I was De Chemmay ? How did you discover that ? " asked the young man.

" Monseigneur, when you wrapped that silken handkerchief about my throat, before I entered the carriage in which you so graciously conveyed me back to Paris, you forgot that the name was embroidered upon it, in golden threads."

" In golden hair," said De Chemmay. " It was my sister's. She and my mother were shot dead before my eyes, Mademoiselle, by a discharge from a musket loaded with iron slugs that day the peasants of Quincey revolted. Then "—the veins upon his white forehead darkened and his eyes gleamed fiercely—" then I said, ' They shall be avenged.' And—you know the rest. I blew up the château, but men, not women, were my victims. Think of my anguish, my grief, my despair, and say whether or no I am a murderer. De Breteuil is the name under which I have been enrolled in the Bodyguard, but I did not think it could serve for concealment long. Nor do I

know that I desire concealment. Amongst my comrades I am safe as in a fortress. Here I am in your hands. Call back the gentleman who has just left you, scream out my name from this window, and St. Eustache will rise *en masse*. Or—shall I do it for you?"

He moved towards the window. Louison burst into tears.

"I was wrong—oh! I was wrong to receive your visits," she sobbed.

"Stolen sweets are the most agreeable," said De Chemmay, "and my visits to your studio during the last three days have been both sweet and stolen. Put down their frequency to my interest in Art, my desire to see the completion of the bust you were good enough to commence. I am more honest and more candid. I have haunted you, Mademoiselle, because, from the moment in which I held you in my arms, your face has haunted me."

His own handsome face was very near that of Louison, and his arm stole round her waist.

"Alas! Monseigneur, I am a girl of the people—you are an aristocrat. What bond can there be between us?"

De Chemmay answered, clasping the slight figure to his heart, "The bond of Love."

As Louison's burning cheek felt the touch of his lips, as his eyes looked into hers, Paradise revealed itself for one moment. The next, there came a knocking at the door.

"Open, Citizeness Louison!" said the voice of David.

"Quick, quick!" breathed the girl, pointing to the cupboard. "In there!"

And as De Chemmay vanished into the musty hiding-place, she unbolted the garret door.

"Citizeness," said David, entering hurriedly, "a discovery has been made to the Council of the Commune with respect to the young man who plucked you from the crowd the other day at Versailles." He breathed heavily,

as though he had ascended the stairs too quickly. "I met my informant as I left the courtyard. The information is correct, I cannot doubt it. The officer of the Body-guard whose bust you have modelled from memory," he said, his cold grey eyes fixed upon the trembling girl, "is none other than the infamous De Chemmay, at whose crime you shuddered the other day. Citizeness, do you wish to serve France and earn the title of a Friend of Freedom?"

His harsh, guttural voice reached the ears of De Chemmay hiding amongst the cobwebs, his stubby feet were planted wide apart in their buckled shoes, his swollen cheeks gave his coarse countenance an air of grotesque ferocity.

"Do you wish to save yourself from the lantern? Bid the gentleman who is hiding in this room step forth and surrender to the representatives of the People. He has been seen to enter this house, dressed in a plain, puce-coloured coat, like a citizen. He calls himself Breteuil, but the Seigneur De Chemmay is his name. Why he comes here, I do not ask. Perhaps to add an innocent girl to his list of victims! I know not, but this is certain, that he shall meet the doom that has been decreed him. It is for men like this Seigneur that I and my comrades grind red. Quick, where is he? Under the bed, up the chimney, in the cupboard?"

He stepped towards the cupboard, but before his hand touched the door it flew open, and De Chemmay stepped into the room.

"At your service, Monsieur."

"You cannot escape, Monseigneur," said David; "there are too many patriots down there in the courtyard. Some may even be climbing the staircase as I speak. They wish to see the man who exterminated a village, and they are likely to be gratified. But you will not be so handsome when they have done with you. Monseigneur, they

will slit your ears and cut off your nose, and then divide your heart. So do not leap from the window down amongst them as I retire to call my friends upon the stair."

And with another of his harsh laughs he moved to the door. But it was locked and bolted, and when the artist would have unfastened it, Louison clung about his arms.

"Mercy, Monsieur David, for the love of God! Mercy, for the love of justice! It is true that Monseigneur blew up his château and killed the men of Quincey. But his mother, his sister, whom he so loved, had first been shot before his eyes. Oh, think of it, Citizen David, and spare him! You are stern, but your heart is tender; you have been kind to me, and I am grateful. But be kinder still. Spare Monsieur De Chemmay, for I love him; for my sake have pity, Monsieur!"

"Child, it is too late to save him," said David sternly. "While I delay here, those in the courtyard grow impatient—they may break in upon us at any moment, and where will your fine Seigneur be then?"

"I know not," said Louison, with head erect and gleaming eyes. "But where he is, there will I be also; and if he dies, I will die with him."

"I am not worthy of this devotion," said De Chemmay "Before Heaven, Monsieur, I deserve some punishment, for—I own it with shame—the purpose that induced me to intrude upon Mademoiselle was one—not lofty—not honourable. Hear me, sweet, pitying angel," he cried, and sank upon his knee before the girl, and took the hem of her coarse dress and kissed it. "It is best that I should live no longer, since I have learned to scorn myself. Let the people drag me to the lantern—let them tear me in pieces. You have owned you love me You will weep for me, and your pure prayers will gain heaven for my soul. What on earth is the gentleman going to do?"

For David had torn off his coat, thrown aside his hat, and in shirt-sleeves, with flowing cravat, had furiously attacked Louison's mass of modelling clay.

"You shall see." A few deft blows and punches, and the unfinished portrait-bust was resolved into a shapeless mass. "Quick, Monsieur," cried the flushed and panting artist; "sit upon this stool, which I place upon the modelling platform. Citizeness, aid me to wind these damp cloths of yours about his body and limbs. Now the clay. Pile it about him, to the shoulders. Leave those and the head and face to me. Quickly, if you would save his life! I hear feet upon the staircase and whispering upon the landing-place."

He worked like one possessed, the sweat pouring down his bulging forehead and gross cheeks. Louison, pale but composed, aided him deftly. A little space of time—perhaps a quarter of an hour—elapsed, and there was a dull blow upon the door.

Louison went to it.

David had not quite finished. Time must be gained.

"Citizeness Louison Chabray!"

"Who calls?" said the girl in a clear voice.

"A Friend of Freedom!"

"Do not breathe perceptibly," whispered David. "Tell me, how long can you endure the weight of the clay?"

"Until it crushes me!" De Chemmay whispered between his teeth, for he dared not move the muscles of his clay-smeared face.

"You have an aristocrat concealed in your chamber!" said the voice at the door. "Open, or we shall break it in."

"I will not open to such an accusation."

"Break in the door, then!"

"Open, child!" cried a voice Louison knew well. "You must not provoke anger by defiance. I have

spoken for you. I have pledged my life upon your patriotism. Let the Friends of Freedom search your room—it is a mere form."

Louison began to sob.

"But my work—it is not finished!"

"*Peste!* will any touch or meddle with it? You see, patriots, what a child it is."

'Children can be cunning, Citizeness Théroigne," growled the first speaker. "Stand back! I break open the door," and at an axe-stroke the panels shivered, and the aperture was crowded with wild faces in an instant.

"A man is here—an aristocrat, in a puce-coloured capote—supposed to be the infamous De Chemmay. Arrest him! Wrong, patriots! This is Citizen David, painter by trade, and designer of national processions. The friend of Marat, the friend of the people, the friend of the nation Let everybody embrace Citizen David!"

"Oh, if you like," said David, wiping his clay-smeared hands, "but first let me finish what I was saying to the Citizeness. Citizeness, I congratulate you upon this portrait-bust of a young man, pondering with closed eyes —upon the state of the nation or his mistress's face. There is more than talent in it, it is full of genius, and the few touches I have added at your request were given more to gratify you than because the work needed them. I will have it removed to my studio to-night; there you may labour upon it without fear of interruption, even from good patriots like these. As to the likeness which you, ignorant that the young officer who saved you was an enemy of France, have modelled from memory, it may one day assist us in identifying the original. Patriots, if you have finished searching the cupboards and chimney for an imaginary aristocrat in a puce-coloured coat, we will leave the Citizeness to her employment."

And he went out, followed by the rabble. Théroigne,

with a hasty embrace of Louison, went after. There was a silence, and then the bust of De Chemmay whispered—

"Will he betray?"

"No, upon my life, Monsieur," whispered back the girl, "he will be true. It is his plan to remove you to-night to his studio, and from thence aid you to escape. Ah, Monsieur, once you are out of danger, promise me you will not run into peril again."

"I promise, for I shall have my guardian angel ever with me," said the clay lips."

"Who—who is that, Monseigneur?" asked the girl faintly.

There were living eyes now in the clay face, and in them shone love.

"My wife, Louison De Chemmay!" said Monseigneur.

A GAME OF FARO

My lord Osbert had lost heavily again at play. Never was there so besotted or so unfortunate a gambler. He had not even the excuse of youth or a great fortune; he was but a nobleman of Jacobite family, impoverished in following the fortunes of the Stuarts. My lady, many years younger than this yet attractive elderly man, had had a handsome fortune to her hand when my lord led her to the altar, but 'twas fast dribbling out of the dicebox. There were two boys, beautiful as angels, but to be poor as beggars through their father's vile weakness.

My lady Osbert was an angel, and I, who, though but her waiting-woman, am the daughter of an Oxford scholar and divine of the Church of England, should know as much about angels as most folks, I dare to say. Never did she bestow upon me a cast brocade or a manteau that had gone out of fashion without a sweet apology.

"You know, good Mrs. Prudence," she would say, "that I am forced to wear 'em longer than most women of my rank, and I trust you will not take it ill if there should be a spot of chocolate upon the lutestring, or candle-wax upon the brocade."

She was beautiful as well as good. Madame Angelica Kauffmann painted her as Charity, with the Honourable Miles and Master Georgie set upon her knees, and the great Sir Joshua Reynolds depicted her as a Grace in a muslin scarf. And Monsieur De Vigne, the great miniature painter, drew the portraits of herself and her two fair boys upon an

ivory case for dice and notes and counters, a pretty thing devised to be a gambler's pocket companion, and she herself penned upon a scroll beneath the portraits of the three fair, smiling, blue-eyed faces—

"*Think of us.*"

My lord was touched to tears by the gift, and swore that she was the best of women, and that he would gamble away no more of her money, or his own—and little enough had he left. But that night he spent at White's, with the Marquess of Fens and his Grace the young Duke of Roxburn, and my lady's friends came rustling and swimming up her staircase next forenoon, every one of 'em with a tale to tell. My lord did not come home from the gaming-house either for breakfast or dinner, though there were guests of consequence to be entertained; and my lady swept down to the head of her table on the arm of one of the wild young noblemen who were said to have ruined the father of her boys.

"I must indeed leave you early, madam; I cannot stay even for the cards or a dish of tea," I heard the Duke of Roxburn say, as I helped the footman place the dishes, and watched to see that her uncle, Sir John Fershaw, who had taken my lord's place at the table-foot, carved the haunch of vension as it should be done.

"Indeed, your Grace," my lady said, turning upon the brilliant young dandy the starry eyes that had been weeping for her husband's follies only half an hour before. "And what is the engagement that cannot be set aside at the entreaty of a lady?"

"Madam," said the Duke, "it is to give a fellow gamester his revenge at faro."

"He has already revenged himself upon his wife and children, sir," said my lady, looking the Duke full in the eyes.

"Madam, I swear to you that the play was fair," cried the nobleman, flushing as scarlet as the Burgundy that glowed in his glass. "Your husband stood to win ten times as much from me."

"It is from me and mine that you reap your winnings, sir," said my lady, pale under her delicate touch of rouge. "Is it not to us you owe the revenge?"

"Madam," asked the Duke; "is this a challenge?"

"Sir," said my lady, with a lovely air of defiance; "you are apt as a gentleman should be to understand."

The Duke dropped his laced napkin and pushed away his neglected plate.

"Upon my faith, madam, I am less apt than you take me to be."

"My husband, Henry Osbert, is waiting for you in one of the private rooms of White's, I am informed," said my lady. "You have won of him twelve thousand pounds, and we are beggars, my children and I, when that is paid you. Yet I kissed my husband yesterday for his promise that he would play no more."

"I will give you the money back into your ladyship's apron as a gift, ma'am," said the young man, with cool insolence, "in return for a couple of the kisses that Osbert holds so cheap."

She said, with a look of ice—

"There are worse conditions than beggary, my lord Duke. You indicate one."

"How else, a Gad's name, can I make you amends, madam," unabashedly demanded he, "if you won't give me something for my money that I have honestly won? Would you not have kissed your husband an' he had beggared me for the next six years? Come, be honest and say."

The conversation and the knives and forks clattered together. The guests were all of my Lord Osbert's choos-

ing, beaux and belles of the loftiest fashion, high-bred rakehells of either sex. "Yet if a wife refuse to honour her husband's table," my lady used to say, "she dishonours both him and herself."

"I thank you, sir, that in bidding me be honest, you show a concern for my husband's name that I had not given you credit for," my lady said.

The Duke looked fairly at her, and, being proud himself, could not but value her noble pride as a thing of worth.

"Zounds, madam!" he said, and swore to it roundly, "next to my mother, I believe you the honestest woman I ever knew. I will give your husband back his money or make a settlement of it upon your eldest son. And I will call Osbert out and run him through the skin below the left ribs, to teach him to value properly the jewel he has at home. Or anything else that you bid me do for you I will, to the best of my ability."

My lady bowed to him across her glass of Burgundy, and wetted her pale lips with the red wine.

"I ask nothing of your Grace but a fair chance to gain back what another had no right to lose. You are going from here to join my lord at the gaming-house! Well, I cannot go with you in my own person, but—I have a young relative who will take my cards and stake my money against what is now yours."

"Ma'am," said the nobleman, "our party is of familiar faces and hands that are not new to the cards."

"Sir," said she, "is my request to be denied me? Besides, let me tell you that my young kinsman is a better faro-player than my lord."

"Well, and that were easy," thought the Duke, I dare-say, but he bowed to my mistress, and she rose and left the table with the ladies. One and all of them were going on to such and such routs and balls. She bade them her gracious adieux, and sent for me to follow her to her powder-

closet, which had a door opening into my lord's wardrobe. And she bade me fetch from the presses a laced shirt of my lord's and a cocked hat, and gloves and a cane, and his newest tie-wig, and the suit of blue-grey satin with cut steel buttons, that the tailor had dunned to be paid for only that very day, and made me help her disguise.

"Lawks! my lady," I kept repeating, as she dressed in her husband's clothes. "I do believe it is going against the Scriptures. And I am a clergyman's child."

"I," said my lady, "am a gambler's wife, and in trying to save my husband I do not think the Scriptures are against me. How much money have I, good girl, in my little strong cabinet?"

"Alas, but three guineas, my lady," said I, "but I have forty pounds sewn up in my father's old black velvet skullcap, in my little hair trunk, and that sum is yours, if you need it."

She kissed me and called me her true friend.

"Lord! but women are good to women!" she said, when I put the money I had taken out of the black velvet skullcap in the pockets of the white brocade waistcoat that went with the blue-grey satin suit. "A mercy it is, seeing how men use us, for all our love. Buckle on my sword, and now put a rokelay on me, and kiss me, and call a chair and a link out of the Square, and pray Heaven for once to favour a game at cards for the sake of a woman who would save her children!"

I fetched the chair.

"To White's," my lady bade the chairman, in as manly a voice as she could put on, and she stepped in and was carried out of the great hall door and down the steps into the darkness of Montague Square, with the link flaring on before.

What happened after that she has told me. She went to the gaming-house and asked for the Duke. He had left

word with the hall-master that a young gentleman was expected. And my lady tripped up the green felt-covered staircase to the private room. Four gentleman were there, one of them Lord Osbert. A small, thin, middle-aged man, he looked shrunken to the size of a boy, and withered into old age by the fever of the hours that had passed over him. And he was biting his nails and looking at the clock, and asking: Was the game to be delayed any longer for the sake of this young puppy of a punter his Grace had chosen to spring upon their party? He started a little when the young puppy was announced.

"Mr. Trueman."

"Hey, Mr. Trueman," said the Duke; "let me tell you that you are more than five minutes late."

"Stap me, your Grace," calls out Mr. Trueman, pertly. "I have broken my ordinary habit for you. I am usually late by half an hour."

And the other gentlemen, the wealthy Marquess of Fens and the Count Zapolyi, roared with laughter, and nicknamed the pert young fellow after a crossed card in the game called "The Little Figure." And they chose a *tailleur* and croupier, and sat down to the green, oval, wood-rimmed table with their cards and *livrets*. My lady's mother had been a noted faro player, and many a time had my lady's knuckles and those of her sisters been rapped over the game.

Well, they played, those five, in the little private room, while the candles guttered low in their sockets and the gold was covered by the bank-bills and I O U's, and young Trueman's forty-three guineas had grown to five thousand.

"The boy," snarled Lord Osbert, "has the luck of hell!"

"Sir," said young Trueman, "whom Heaven helps has no need to knock at that red-hot door below." He had

won five times, with a *Paroli Sept et le va, Quinze et le va,* and *Trente et le va,* and played to win again.

They roared at the idea of Heaven aiding a punter.

Young Mr. Trueman played for *Soixante et le va,* the highest chance in the game, and won. The Duke rapped out an oath. Lord Osbert, haggard and ghastly, pushed back his chair.

"If I had been in bed last night, demnation take it!" he cried, "I should have had a better chance. As it is, I am flummoxed. Roxburn, lend me five hundred to go on with. Take my I O U."

"My dear friend," said the Duke, shrugging his shoulders, "I have got to I O U's myself!"

They played till the grey leaden morning looked in through the blue blinds. Then young Mr. Trueman rose, the richer by twenty-two thousand pounds, in gold, bank-bills, and I O U's. Lord Osbert, a broken man, leaned across the table and offered him, with a shaking hand, a diamond solitaire.

"Nay, keep it, my lord," said Mr. Trueman, gently. "It was a lady's gift. She will miss it when you meet at dinner."

The ruined gambler groaned.

"When we meet . . . " he muttered.

"I have a message for you from her, my lord," said Mr. Trueman, "given me last night when she knew that I should meet you here. '*There is nothing so good,*' said she, '*that a wife cannot share with her husband. There is nothing so bad, but a man may halve it with his wife.*' I take it that your lady foresaw the result of your punting. And I counsel you to spend the night of this day in the bed that is your own."

Young Mr. Trueman crossed to the door and unlocked it, and went quietly away. And my Lord Osbert did appear that day at dinner. He looked twice his years, and a half

of his size, and his veined hands trembled. There were no guests, and my lady wore a simple sacque and laced cap. I was the only servant waiting at the table.

"For I wish to be private to-day, my dear lord," said my mistress, "and to have a husband that belongs to me alone."

"Madam," said my lord, "you hold fee in a very poor property."

"That may possibly be," said she, with spirit, "but, such as the property is, I believe it to be entirely my own."

"Heaven knows, madam, I am a prodigal, but not a traitor," said my lord, with a pulse beating in his sallow cheek. "And that you are as loyal as you are lovely, I have never entertained a doubt. The message you sent to me at White's last night goes to prove that. But for it I should never have faced you again. For I have beggared you and our children, madam, with my cursed weakness for play. Twelve thousand the day before yesterday to the Duke of Roxburn, and eight thousand lost last night, make up the extent of the losses I have incurred since you gave me this," and he threw the ivory counter-case upon the table. "My love for you and for my children has not restrained me from ruining you all. I confess it before this worthy young woman, whose conduct in our house has won her the regard due rather to a relative than to a dependant."

He spoke these kind words of me. I could not refrain from tears, and my lady's beautiful eyes were running over.

"Oh! Osbert, it pains me that you should humble yourself thus," she said, "and yet—I love you for it. Give me your promise yet once more, before Heaven and in the presence of this good girl, and the portraits of my father and your mother"—my lord and my lady were dining in the small panelled room where these portraits hang—"will look down upon a happy wife. For this time I believe your promise will be kept."

My lord sprang to his feet at that and struck his hand upon the table, and swore a solemn oath never to gamble with the cards or the dice again.

"Not," he added with a shrug, when he had finished, "that it is worth while shutting the stable door after the steed is stolen. I must mortgage our last acres for funds to-morrow, and we must retire to your dower-house and estate at Callington, and cultivate the cabbages, madam, until the boy comes of age."

"I am fond of cabbage-soup, made after the French recipe, my lord," said my lady, "though the vegetable, as served up by our English cooks, has ever seemed to me tasteless. Fill me up a glass of your good old Burgundy now, and another for kind Prudence here, who is drying her eyes with her apron as happily as if she were in the pit at Drury Lane, and I will give you a toast which both of you must drink heartily: "To our happy days to come!"

My lady rose and my Lord Osbert with her, and we drank the toast and clinked glasses, and then—

"You have thanked me for a message I sent you at the gaming-house last night," said my lady. "I may as well tell you, my dear, that I sent no message at all."

My lord started and grew very red.

"Madam, the person who gave me a message said that you expected me to dinner to-day, and added, in the words of a proverb that I have heard you quote before: 'There is nothing so good that a wife cannot share with her husband. There is nothing so bad but a man may halve it with his wife.'"

"And did Mr. Trueman say so indeed?" cried my lady, with sparkling eyes of laughter. "Why, he is a very pretty authority as well as a very pretty fellow, and I will take his lead. Here is something good that I am willing to share with you, my lord, and I hope you will not be the less inclined to divide the spoil with me, that the larger part of

it was won from yourself by that redoubtable punter Mr. Trueman. In notes of the bank, gold, and I O U's, this laced handkerchief contains "—she drew it from her lap and placed it upon the table—" twenty-two thousand pounds. We will burn your I O U's, but I am disposed to be less generous with the others, who can well afford to pay."

" But—zounds ! madam, who is this Mr. Trueman, and how is it that you, my wife, should think it no shame to take from him this great sum of money," cried my lord, with white lips. " Return the money instantly, or I will; and tell me at once where this presumptuous young impertinent is to be found ? "

" He is at your table, my lord," cried my lady, " and has just drunk with you a toast. If you wish to call him out you must lend him your blue-grey satin coat and breeches, and the white-brocade waistcoat, for he has no other clothes, poor boy. His wig was the very one you are wearing now, sir; there shall be no more mystification between us. I wore your clothes last night when I gambled to win back my children's fortune and my husband's honour. And here I solemnly pledge my oath, before Heaven and before you, never to touch cards or dice again ! Kiss me, my husband." The sweet creature left her place and ran round the table to him, where he stood in utter confusion, and fell upon his neck. " We have both of us played our last game at faro ! "

And, indeed, my lady prophesied the truth.

THE VENGEANCE OF THE CHERRY-STONE

Madonna Properzia de' Rossi, of Bologna the many-steepled, described by Vasari as "a maiden of rich gifts, equally excellent with others in the disposition of household matters, and sufficiently distinguished in Art and Science to awaken the envy, not only of women, but of men," was also highly favoured by Nature in personal graces and charms. She was tall, one reads, slender as a ray of sunshine and moving swiftly as light. The beauty and adroitness of her fine long hands is especially noted by her biographer. Her voice was excellent music, her hair seemed woven of the very gold, while her dark eyes gleamed like changeful agates from beneath their ambushes of jetty lashes, over-arched by brows, solemn and sable as the Pythia's. These things the other women, the Signora Vittoria, the Signora Veronica, the Catarina Anguisciola, and a hundred other Bolognese ladies of her day, may have envied her. As for the science, I daresay they valued it not a pin. But this was in the beginning of the sixteenth century, and women may have changed since then, though I do not believe it. Properzia sang and played on musical instruments better than any woman of her day in the city of Bologna. She was not only musician, but artist and sculptor, to the very tips of those fine long fingers of hers. In the music-chamber or studio a thing inspired, she was elsewhere merely a finished coquette, as many handsome, well-provided, and well-mannered gentlemen had realised with smartings. Yet as fast as the defeated

aspirants retired in discomfiture, new heroes crowded into the breach. The siege seemed indefinite, as certain witty persons remarked, and the day seemed far off that should see the banner of a conqueror displayed upon the citadel.

Now, in these days, the Cathedral of San Petronio being yet unfinished, many of the most celebrated artists and sculptors of Italy had applied to the Cathedral Superintendent of Works, demanding by their known skill and great reputation that a portion of the labour yet to be executed should be entrusted to them. This Superintendent was a lean, dry, haggard-eyed man, one Nugarola by name: a person but slightly skilled in mechanics, hydraulics and architecture, but sprung from a good if undistinguished Lombard family. He had been secretary to Pope Clement VII., when Giulio de' Medici was a mere Cardinal, and who was now provided for in the holding of this and other public offices in the exercise of which he palpably grew wealthy. Undoubtedly, Nugarola had sticky fingers, but people were not disposed to talk of that aloud. The citizens of Bologna were merchants to a man, and the armies of artisans employed in the completion of the Cathedral consumed vast quantities of oil, of wine, of pease-flour, of macaroni, and of sausages, for all of which they paid honestly, whether they were honestly paid or no. As for the hemp, another article of commerce which brought grist to the mill of many an astute Bolognese—the Cathedral works consumed plenty of that, and yet not so much, said one or two, but that when time of need came there would be found a yard or two to hang the unjust steward with. But the time had not yet come for that, and Nugarola went on filling his coffers, until one day the gleam of Madonna Properzia's gold hair seemed brighter than his hoarded gold crowns, and the miser became covetous of a woman's beauty.

He did not openly court Madonna Properzia, for Nugarola did nothing openly, and for a man well dried with years, and pinched and wizened with the meaner passions, to court comparison with younger and comelier lovers would have been unwise, and Nugarola was both wise and crafty. In the service of the Medici he had learned in angling for men—and sometimes women—to bait his hook, not for the type, but for the individual, and he knew what tunes may be played by a skilful hand upon a master-passion.

Thus when he rode one morning upon an ambling pad to visit the quarries without the city walls, and saw a group of gentlemen as gaily dressed as peacocks, gathered about the portals of the Casa Rossi, waiting until such time as Madonna Properzia should come forth on her way to Mass, he only smiled a tight-mouthed smile and made a rustling sound in his throat. The page of one gallant bore fruit and flowers, another slim servitor a lute, while yet another carried a jewel-casket, and on the wrist of another slim jackanapes perched a parroquet.

"*Sia!* It's true enough that women are caught by things like these," thought Nugarola, "but not a woman like Properzia, with a man's strength lurking in her slim body, and a man's ambition covered by her gold hair. So, let these elder-pith puppets play their play. It amuses Properzia . . and hurts not me!"

Still, he checked his slow-pacing hackney upon the shady side of the street, and while appearing to cheapen water-melons, checked off the wooers of Properzia. There was Battiferra, a handsome young lawyer and rising politician; there were the twin brothers Michele and Giovannini Schioppa, two inseparables undivided even in the love of the same lady. There was the Cavaliere Cicognara, newly from the wars in Lower Italy, boastful of scars and prodigal of French phrases; Count Antonio Grassi, a slim, perfumed creature, fantastically clothed, and of strange exotic airs,

was there, looking as though he ought to be set in water in a crystal vase, and kept upon an inlaid cabinet at a lady's elbow. And standing a little apart from these, wrapped in a dark-coloured mantle, and attended by no page, Count Alessandro de' Pepoli.

The melons took a long while cheapening. The bargain was not concluded when the heavy door-bolts ground in the stone grooves, and Madame Properzia came out of her house, followed by one of her women.

It had been a fine day before, but it seemed to every male creature within sight as though the street grew sunnier and the April breeze, sweet enough before, became the very triple essence of Spring. Something cold and sickly seemed to fall upon the heart of the miser cheapening melons in the shade.

"I am in love," Nugarola said to himself; "like a boy—like a fool—like a prodigal; in love with that tall, slim, bright-haired girl!"

And in his agitation he paid the melon-seller a farthing too much. Meanwhile Properzia held her court, and received her offerings, while the steeple-bells chimed and the swallows wheeled and twittered and the sunbeams contended for a nest in her twined tresses, which that day were braided with pearls and adorned with a green velvet coif, pearl-bordered. Her gown was of green velvet, slashed and embroidered with silver, and she looked like a tall lily in the midst of a bed of gaudy parrot tulips.

Not that the Count Alessandro deserved the tulip simile. He held a little aloof, wrapped in his dark mantle, and when the flowers, the sweetmeats, the sonnet written by the twins, the lute and the popinjay had been presented, he came forward and, baring his smooth brown locks, straight cut above the level eye-brows and falling to the embroidered collar of his doublet behind, offered Madonna Properzia a single sprig of laurel. The blush and eye-sparkle with

which she received it drove home the spur of jealousy to the miser's quick.

Nugarola rode on to the quarries, spent the rest of the day in grinding the workfolk, and delved deep in thought all that night.

Letters were laid before him upon the following morning. One parchment, curiously tied with green floss and sealed with the device of an aspiring flame, gave him no premonitory thrill as he cut the silk. But his heart leapt like a grasshopper in his lean bosom as he deciphered. Madonna Properzia applied, through the medium of her uncle, Messer Bardo de' Rossi, to the Superintendent of the Cathedral works, praying to be entrusted with at least a portion of the labours to be executed when the three doors of the principal façade of San Petronio were to be decorated with panels of figures in marble. The sprig of laurel had taken root with a vengeance! Nugarola knew that now, if ever, his opportunity should come.

"A man's ambition. Did I not say so?" he muttered. And Madonna Properzia received a reply in due course, written upon the finest parchment and sealed with the City arms. The Superintendent, having heard of the extraordinary skill in sculpture manifested by the gifted niece of Messer Bardo de' Rossi, was favourably inclined towards granting her petition; but it was first necessary that he should be permitted to see some specimen of her work, some proof of her powers, some fruit of the chisel wielded by the white and delicate hands of the loveliest lady in Bologna.

"How does he know they are white?" cried Properzia, hanging over her uncle's shoulder as Messer Bardo deciphered. She was blooming as a rose in her working dress, a loose robe of dark blue linen tied with a cord about the waist and with a monkish cowl, which could be used to shield her lovely head from dust and marble chips. "And what does he know about the loveliness of ladies?"

"*Corpaccio!*" said Bardo; "the old fox has eyes and ears. But what shall you show him? For, mark you, he knows the best. He will take a bribe, for it is in his blood; and from the scurviest stone-chipper or fresco-dauber in Italy; but, for all that, no bad work goes into the Cathedral. If anything he can love, he loves that."

Properzia half-closed her eyes. As the black lashes mingled on her cheeks she looked both sweet and sly.

"What shall I show him? H'm!" She pondered, or affected to do so.

"That portrait bust of the Count Alessandro," said her uncle. "It lives, almost. There is soul in it, be it his or yours."

So it was arranged. On a certain day a little procession set out from the Casa Rossi. First came Messer Bardo leading Madonna Properzia. A couple of stout fellows, men accustomed to the handling of such objects, followed, bearing the bust of the Count Alessandro, and three armed servants brought up the rear. The procession moved at a good pace towards the house of the Superintendent, a large but gloomy dwelling situated in the square of the Hospital Della Morte. Signor Nugarola, grave and somewhat saturnine of aspect in his furred velvet robe and golden chain, received the sculptress and her uncle in a large upper chamber hung with tapestry representing the Rape of Proserpina.

The bust was set in a good light and uncovered, and Nugarola, carefully as he had schooled himself, could not repress one slight movement of admiration. In the finest marble of Carrara had Properzia wrought the almost breathing image of the handsomest of a handsome race. Grave yet half-smiling, the superbly-modelled head a little bent, the eyelids a little lowered, Count Alessandro seemed to offer to the spectator a sprig of laurel, poised between the delicate nervous fingers of his right hand. The work

possessed all the merit of the ancients, and afterwards gave infinite satisfaction not only to the Pepoli family, but to the whole city.

But in the meantime Signor Nugarola, that first irresistible impulse repressed, preserved a neutral aspect, and when Messer Bardo de' Rossi, growing impatient at the delay, asked for an opinion—

"Signore," said Nugarola, "I will speak, but to the lady, and, with your permission, alone."

Whereupon Messer Bardo, with ruffled plumes and smarting dignity, withdrew to the ante-chamber, and Nugarola and Madonna Properzia were left alone,

"Madonna," said the Superintendent, scratching his lean blue chin; "that you have a gift is most apparent. Yet ladies who contend with men in the arena of Art have many obstacles to surmount in the attainment of that noble desire which has its end in Fame. For one thing, you cannot go abroad as freely as men do, mix with your intellectual peers and command open acknowledgment of your equal claims to genius. For another, an' you could, you would not be permitted, for Scripture is against that assumption, and man, as the first created and therefore superior being, is naturally not disposed to encourage presumption in the female."

Here Madonna Properzia, sitting in a carved chair with the sunshine upon her head, answered, smiling sweetly—

"Yet, Signore, is the bust which you behold not the first but the second essay at a portrait in marble of the Count Alessandro Pepoli. The first, upon the honour of an artist, was dirt in comparison with this one! And if a first attempt be bettered by a second, as is the almost invariable rule, why should Adam be so infinitely superior to Eve?"

"Lady, to suffer the mind to dwell upon such a question were to cast a slur upon Divine revelation and incur the stigma of heresy," the Superintendent said. His flat grey

eyes showed nothing of the greedy rapture with which they travelled over the fair face and form before him; but his lean hands opened and shut as they would have done had their owner looked upon a heap of gold.

"Ah, Queen of Heaven!" burst out Properzia, smarting and starting like a newly clipped ewe in a furze-brake, under the cool contempt of Nugarola's look and tone. "When men are in my company, Messere, they are not wont to prate of their superiority or to decry my sex. What matters if an artist wear hose or petticoats, so the work of his or her hands be worthy? I do not come here for flatteries, Dio mio! but to ask for a just judgment from you. Am I worthy to work upon the façade of San Petronio—or am I unworthy to shape the doorposts of the dirtiest tavern in Bologna?"

There were scalding tears in Properzia's beautiful eyes, but though her bosom heaved, she would not let them fall. And Nugarola answered—

"Madonna, you are worthy or not worthy, according as I shall pronounce." He unfolded his lean palm and displayed in it a crushed fly, captured but a moment before, and a sudden glimpse of yellow teeth showed between his thin lips.

"I have summoned the Council of Superintendents; they will be here shortly, and they will look upon this work of yours, but with my eyes. They will deliver a decision, but with my voice." He tossed away the fly and smiled. "Fat sausage merchants, thick-headed sellers of macaroni and oil, what do they know of Art? Where I lead they will follow; what I say they will believe. I am the workman—they are my tools. And the labourer is worthy of his hire!"

Properzia began to understand. The Superintendent wanted a bribe. Faugh! what a preamble about a thousand crowns or so. Her red lips curled.

"I am rich enough," she said, "to pay the workman's

wage. How much, Signore? And in what coin will you be paid?" Upon which Signor Nugarola told her, in the unminced language of those days. She seemed to rear to twice her height, her hair a golden flame, her cheeks a scarlet hue, while lightnings darted from her agate eyes.

"Madonna! And to this end—this! All this religious, moral, fatherly preamble. A judge of Art—a judge of women. My compliments, Signore!" She swept a curtsey, then, straightening to her height, "For this, I have kept my name unsoiled, my honour unspotted. I may not gain my laurels save at a price—your price! I may not wear my crown of Art until your lips have soiled—your touch degraded me. Out, you grey bargainer! Lean wolf, take that!" And in an overwhelming frenzy of wrath and indignation, Properzia raised her white hand and dealt Nugarola a hearty buffet full upon the cheek.

She had the strength of a skilled workman with the chisel and mallet in those beautifully moulded arms of hers. It was but a second; and Nugarola spat his teeth, which were of boxwood strung upon gold wires, into his sleeve, and wiped a thin trickle of blood that stole down his lean chin. Then, smiling with closed lips upon Properzia, he rang the silver chiming-bell that stood upon his table and bade his pages summon Messer Bardo, and inform their Excellencies of the Council of Superintendents that the work and the artist waited their supreme pleasure. Soon ten or a dozen worthy citizens of Bologna were gathered in a knot at the upper end of Nugarola's great chamber, staring with dull eyes and puffed cheeks at the smiling bust of Count Alessandro. It seemed good—but then, per Bacco! it might not be worth a quattrino. Messer Nugarola was a judge of Art. Better wait and let Messer Nugarola speak.

Messer Nugarola did not keep their Sagacities long a-waiting. He rose and spread his hands. He spluttered

a little in speaking and revealed the loss of teeth. But his words were gentle and suave, and his smile spoke for the goodness of his heart. He besought the great critics before him, the noble Signori, to remember the weakness of woman, and be merciful even though just. Here before them was an honourable lady, a maid of Bologna, who had set herself with her inferior feminine faculties, and despite the weakness of her sex, to contend for the honour for which strong men gave their lives, their blood!

She, Madonna Properzia de' Rossi, had dared to pit herself against men in the struggle; therefore, though pity might be accorded her in consideration of her feminine feebleness, it behoved that she be dealt with as a man among men. She craved a commission from the Council of Superintendents to sculpture the doors of San Petronio, on the strength of the bust here exhibited of a certain nobleman, which bust in merit was, be it candidly spoken, worth just a cherry-stone. Let Madonna Properzia take the lesson to heart, retire to her house, and hereafter sculpture cherry-stones, leaving the broader walks of Art to men, who alone were fitted to walk in them.

There was a gentle bleating babble of laughter at this. The injured artist rose and faced the Superintendent and his flock of wethers.

"Thanks, Signore, for your good counsel. From henceforth, as you advise, I will sculpture cherry-stones. A thousand thanks, Signore!"

And Messer Bardo, cursing softly under his beard, for of course the girl had no talent, and he had well deserved to be a laughing-stock for setting any value on her clay-puddings and stone-chippings, led his niece away. The insulted bust was carried after by men who despised the glorious burden.

Madonna Properzia was as good as her word. She procured the finest, the most delicate steel instruments, and

from that day she carved cherry-stones. So absorbed was she in her new art, that she was lost to her lovers; they felt as though the sun had suddenly grown cold.

Only Count Alessandro managed to find admittance—she could neither bolt her doors nor lock her heart against Love. And he proclaimed her artist, and vaunted of the bust, openly, everywhere, and many persons sought to see it, and seeing, exclaimed. Properzia did not seem to hear their praises, but went on carving cherry-stones and presently those deft white fingers of hers achieved a miracle.

Upon a cherry-stone she carved in relief and in the most minute and exquisite manner the story of the Unjust Steward. The closer you looked into the carved parable, the stronger the magnifying glass you brought to bear upon it, the more perfect it appeared; and all the heads were portraits, the Unjust Steward being to the very life Messer Nugarola. Those who saw the wonder descanted to others, and soon every tongue in Bologna wagged of Properzia's cherry-stone. Nugarola heard of it, and of the appropriate use to which his features had been put.

"Oh, ah!" said he; "so this is Madonna's vengeance. Well, cherry-stones are hard to digest—and may even cause a fatal obstruction." And he sent a sure messenger with a word to the Tavern of the Grasshopper, where he knew he should find the man he wanted The man was a black-avised bully in a leather doublet, who kept his weapons as clean as he himself was dirty. That night he came to Nugarola, whom he found in his office busy with accounts.

"Smerdo!" said Messer Nugarola, "I have an errand for you. There are twenty silver crowns to be earned by discharging it well!"

"What is to be done, Excellence?" growled Smerdo scratching his frowsy head.

"Nothing but to teach a woman discretion," said Nugarola, and explained how he would have it done.

"But this is a new job for me," said the hireling. "I have slit the noses of many men, but never that of a lady. And this is a beautiful woman, they say. Why spoil God's work like that?"

"Look you," said Nugarola, grey as ashes; "you have your choice. Your life is mine to spill when I like; that I have not poured you, dregs that you are, out upon the ground, is because I had use for you. Carve me that accursed face of hers into a thing of horror; crush the cherry-stone beneath your heel before you leave the Casa Rossi, or, better, bring it to me. I have told you that you may gain admittance to Properzia by pretending that you come with a message from the Count Alessandro de' Pepoli. She receives without question all who use that name."

"I like not the job, but as you say, so I must do," shrugged Smerdo; "*servo suo*, Excellence! At midnight expect me, with news and the cherry-stone."

And he swaggered out. Nugarola sat between his parchment books and money-scales for hours, and gnawed his nails, while the many-wicked lamp burned dim and the hours clashed from Bologna's hundred steeples. At midnight some one scratched at a little door that opened on a back street, and a sleepy page unbolted and led Smerdo to the presence of the Superintendent.

"Is it done?" asked Nugarola, with palpable pulses beating in his lean grey cheeks, as the bravo, in obedience to a sign, shot the door-bolt.

"Done!" said Smerdo, wiping sweat-drops from his tanned forehead with his hairy fingers. "Per Bacco!" he went on; "she was a lovely woman, but she's no beauty now. Your soul burns for it, not mine! And here's the cherry-stone."

And he drew it from his pouch and laid it on the table,

swept up the twenty crowns, and was about to go when the sound of a tumult in the street caught Nugarola's ear.

"Dolt! you have been seen and followed!" He gnashed at the clumsy villain with his false teeth, tore aside the tapestry of the wall, touched a spring that moved a panel, and pushed Smerdo into the hiding-place revealed. Then, as the tapestry fell, he returned to his table, and was sitting there, toiling over his accounts, when Bardo de' Rossi and Count Alessandro, with their following, thundered at the bolted door. As he rose to open it, he spied upon the table the damning cherry-stone, the one visible proof of his guilt.

"Hide it!" was his first thought. "No, no, they may search," something seemed to answer; and Messer Nugarola caught up the cherry-stone and swallowed it. Then his face changed—he caught at his throat—looked round for wine or water, gurgled horribly, and fell—writhing in the agonies of suffocation. The Unjust Steward was dead by the time the door was broken in. The cherry-stone was found in his swollen throat; and men spoke with 'bated breath of the judgment of high Heaven!

APAMÉ

In the second year of the reign of that king of Persia, surnamed "The Mighty," this thing befell.

Now the king had a concubine exceeding fair. In all the countries of Persia, of Media, of Egypt, Syria, or Phœnicia, was to be found no woman so beautiful as Apamé, the daughter of Rabsases Themasius.

For her hairs were like the work of the worker in gold-wire; and her voice like the cooing of doves; like unto the eyes of the cameleopard were her eyes for blackness and brilliance; and her brows were twin arches of carven ebony, spanning the portals of the alabaster House of the Soul. And her cheek was like the blossom of the pomegranate, and her teeth the pearly seeds of the ripe fruit thereof; and her hands and feet were as the flowers of the lotus lily; and sweet as the fragrance of ambergris was the breath of Apamé. And in her two hands she held the heart of the king—ay, under her feet she set it like unto a crimson footstool.

And the king ruled the world, but Apamé ruled the king.

Now the king had vowed a vow of old time, that when he came to his kingdom, he would build up anew the Temple of Jerusalem, which had lain unfinished since the days of Artaxerxes and Cambyses. And much gold was needed for the work.

And Apamé saw rings of gold and vessels of gold, with jewels of price, and costly garments, being borne from the royal treasury. And she asked the king why this was done.

And the king answered Apamé, and said, "Heart of

mine, it is that I may keep my vow in that I swore to rebuild the holy Temple of Jerusalem, when that I came unto the throne of Persia!"

And she wept and protested, and cried, "Thou lovest me not, that wouldest despoil thyself for Judea! Behold, in all the time thou hast possessed me, I have not received of thee in gifts one-twentieth of this great sum thou givest." And she made sore complaint, and loosed her locks that fell about her like a golden mantle, and looked tearfully upon the king, saying again with sobs, "Thou lovest me not!"

And the king melted, and said, "That I love thee, the Lord of the light, even the flaming Ruler of the heavens knoweth! Therefore, take thou the treasure, for thou art dearer even than mine oath to me."

And Apamé caused her servants to bear those riches to a secret place, and she gladdened the heart of the king with her kisses, saying, "Now I know that thou lovest me indeed."

But in a little while came the chief priests and Levites of Jerusalem unto Persia.

And they sought the presence of the king, and bowed themselves before him, and cried—

"Most Mighty, remember the oath which thou didst swear before the days of thy prosperity, and cause to be delivered unto us the treasure which thou hast held back!"

And the king was abashed, and went out from before them, even to the chamber of Apamé.

And seeing him moody, she laid her palms upon his eyelids, and drew his head upon her breast, and spake sweet words, so that the sting of the King's dishonour ceased to irk him. And he told her wherefore the priests and Levites were come.

And she said, "What dost thou fear from these?"

And the king answered, "That they should proclaim me a breaker of oaths when they return to their country."

And she laid her lips to his ear, and spake softly, saying, "Need they return?"

And the king said, "Needs they must if no mischance befall them by the way."

And Apamé counselled the king that the ambassadors should be slain; and the king was as wax in her hands; and the thing was done. And no one questioned thereof, for the men of Judea had come secretly to the presence of the king.

Now the heart of Apamé was lifted up with pride, and she grew insolent in the power of her beauty.

And the king made a great feast. And Apamé lay at the right hand of the king, under the canopy, and the princes of Media and Persia did homage to her, as the governors and captains and lieutenants. And these, dazzled by her loveliness, as men who look upon the sun at noonday, cried with one voice and said, "Mighty is the power of the king, but mightier still the beauty of Apamé!"

And she said to the king, "Hearest thou? I am greater than thou. Therefore I pray thee set thy crown upon my head, that I be not without the symbol of my sovereignty."

And the king, being bondslave of her body, did as she bade him, and crowned her with his crown.

And she said, "Yet am I not satisfied, except thou put into my hand thy sceptre."

And the king gaped upon her as one besotted because of her loveliness, and gave her the sceptre; and the princes and governors looked one upon another strangely, for the sceptre of the king is sacred.

And Apamé cried yet again, "O King, if thou lovest me, do this other thing I ask of thee. Put off thy kingly robe, and lay it on my shoulders, so shall I be queen indeed of thee and all the world!"

And the king yielded, and laid his kingly robe upon her,

and she shone in her fairness like the daughter of Mithra, so that those who looked upon her were enthralled, and did her royal homage, whilst the king sat by like one of little note.

And Apamé in her heart, because the king had belittled himself at her bidding, despised him. And she drank of the wine of Shiraz, and mocked him over the goblet's brim. And the king endured it.

And she mocked him a second time over the golden beaker, and he bit his lip till the blood ran down, for he perceived his folly; but he said no word.

And a third time she mocked him, and stretched out her hand and plucked one hair forth from the king's beard, and cast it upon the floor.

And the king's countenance became overcast, and he looked upon her piercingly, so that she trembled.

And Apamé arose in haste, and took the royal crown from her head, and the royal robe from her shoulders, and laid the sceptre of Persia from her hand, and went to the king and knelt before him.

And the king said, "Lo! thou hast been beloved of me, and greatly cherished, and for my favour hast repaid me with mockery and scorn. Therefore kneel not to me, but to thy gods, to whom thou must depart in a little while, for thou hast overpassed my patience!"

And Apamé cried, and said. "O Mightiest! by how much have I overpassed thy patience?"

And the king said, "By the breadth of an hair!"

And she bowed herself, and fell at his feet, and cried, "Lord of the world! and am I then so far beyond pardon?"

And the king answered, "By the length of an hair! Therefore make ready to die. For thou shalt not see the sunrise again."

And she dishevelled her locks, and clung about the king's knees and bathed them with her tears, and moaned.

"O Son of Mithra, forget not our first long kiss of love, and the early days when thou didst take me from my father, and the hour when a new-born babe lay in my bosom, and smiled on thee with eyes that were thine own! Have these things no weight with thee?"

And the king said, "Verily, and ay! and their weight is the weight of an hair."

And he smote his hands together, and his armed men came running to him. And they slew Apamé with the sword, near to the king's footstool, so that her blood ran down upon the steps of the throne.

But her body was taken up and embalmed, and laid in the royal sepulchre, because she had borne a son unto the king.

WHITE MAN'S MAGIC

In the September of 1904 I went out again to South Africa. For no special reason save that, out of that vast graveyard of Englishmen one grave called to me with a voice I could not but hear. I went up by rail from Cape Town to Veldfontein, and set out from thence in a hooded Cape cart drawn by a fairly decent team of mules. The expense I shared with another woman, who had been a third-class passenger on board the Union Castle steamship, a resolute, plain person in rusty black, who, like myself, had come southwards looking for a grave. We paid the Dutchman who owned the corrugated iron hotel where we had slept so much per hour of six miles for the cart and team, and so much a day for our food, which was singularly abominable. A silent young Boer drove, and the team was fed and watered and the various duties of the camp performed by a grey-headed, elderly native of the Barala tribe, whose name was M'Toba. In tribal undress, M'Toba might have been picturesque. In a dirty shirt, battered straw hat, and ragged tan cord trousers, he was merely squalid.

The weather was superb, and hotter than the Punjab in May. I had a solar topi with a pugri, but nothing would induce that determined woman in the rusty crape to exchange her widow's bonnet even for a Boer woman's *kappje* of white twill.

"I hope I know," she said, "what is due to the dead, whether I'm in South Hafrica or the South of England." She hailed from a little country town in Deershire, called Padbury, where she kept a little draper's shop, and she

carried a clumping brown-paper parcel, which never left her day or night. Her name was Mrs. Martha Floydie, and she was a stern Dissenter.

We trekked for three days over the scarred, scorched, ploughed-up north veld. We saw enough Government iron still lying scattered among the sprouting karroo, to have made the fortune of a dealer in scrap. We turned in sickening horror from teams of skeleton beasts of burden, their poor bones picked clean by those sanitary officers, the *aasvogels*. We passed by ruined and roofless homesteads of Boer and Briton, where men of both races were hauling out of the mud with hide ropes the great stones that had made the dam walls before they were blown up with dynamite cartridges. And on the evening of the third day we found the place we sought. There were wild white and purple gladioli growing amongst the boulders of the cairn, and on a monolith of white marble fixed among them at its summit I found the name I sought, carved with the names of others of the handful of brave men who were overpowered by numbers in the fight to save the convoy. Here is the inscription—

To the Memory of
Captain the Hon. Philip Allan,
Lieutenant A. H. Myers,
with
Lance-Corporal Pervey
and
Privates T. Key and W. Floydie
2nd Battalion Deershire Regt.

Who Died in defending a Convoy of Provisions and Ammunition from an attack by 500 Boers,

June 10, 1901.

This Stone has been erected by the
Guild of Loyal Women, May 1904.

I was glad the grave had not gone unmarked. It was very like Gertrude Allan not to have done anything. I had met her at the Guards Regatta at the end of July, prettier than ever, and with her new husband in tow, a stout, shiny, ex-Army Clothing Contractor, with a brand-new title and sacksful of hard cash.

"Wasn't it rough, being left a widow so young? Of course I had to marry again," Gertrude had said, crumpling her delicate eyebrows and consciously arranging a two-thousand-guinea string of pearls, a simple ornament which went well with her unpretending gown of peek-a-boo *lingerie;* "I am the kind of woman who must be looked after by a devoted husband, or languish. Why don't *you* marry? Phil always said he was sure you would *never care* about any man. And *I* always believed you were frightfully in love with somebody who couldn't propose *avec l'honneur!*" Her silly laugh jarred on me. I was glad when she had introduced her stout Contractor and passed on.

It was afterwards I began to hear the voice from that South African grave. Now I stood beside it, and the great gorgeous blue sky that pavilioned us was not more dry of tears. I had not anything to lay upon the boulders underneath which that brave heart lay mouldering. But the woman in rusty black untied her cherished brown paper parcel and produced a dumpy glass-case containing a green and white crockery wreath, of the kind one sees hanging up in certain undertakers' windows. Mrs. Floydie wiped away her tears from the glass and held the glass-case to me that I might read the inscription on the luggage-label attached. It ran—

'To our Dearest Boy Bill. From Mother, and his Loving Sweetheart Grace.'

"It nearly broke Grace's heart," the mother said, wiping her eyes with a stiff, clean, black-edged pocket-hand-

kerchief. I hoped no native might filch the token, and that no prankish ape would smash it with a stone, but I felt doubtful.

I sat by the cairn of boulders an hour and then we came away. I noticed while sitting there that, about a dozen paces distant from the cairn, there was another grave, quite nameless and comparatively new. And that night, when we outspanned, sitting by the camp-fire I learned from M'Toba, who spoke Missionary English, with the admixture of a little Dutch, and who tended the mules and cooked and waited on us two women and the silent young Boer, who did nothing but drive when he was not eating, smoking or sleeping—what manner of man he was who lay buried there.

" He was a *rooinek* soldier, *mevrouw*, who was wounded and taken prisoner by the Booren at Rotspan. He got away and ran for life and they fired a volley after him as he ran, and saw him throw up his arms and roll down into a deep *sluit*, and they made sure he was dead, and rode on with the convoy and the prisoners. But the white soldier lay hid until the dark came down, and then he found his way to the kraals of my people, the Barala.

" It was nearly a year since the Relief of Gueldersdorp, and Wessels Moutsoia, our king, was dead, and Lebolo his nephew ruled awhile until my people got tired of him and sent him to tell Moutsoia so."

" I think you mean they killed him, M'Toba ? "

" Perhaps, mistress. He was not as good a king as Wessels Moutsoia. The old man died of hunger, died of hunger in the Barala stad, while the Booren sat outside Gueldersdorp. A witch doctor with plenty of good *umtagali* —what white men call magic—might have saved him, but where was the bullock ? They fill the new-drawn entrails with the blood, *mevrouw*, and——"

" Pah !—yes, I have heard. But go on about the white soldier."

"He was of the Desa Regiment, he told us."

"The Deershire Regiment, yes?"

"And at first he was mad to go back to the other *rooineks* and fight again. Then he became quiet and content."

M'Toba took another horn spoonful of snuff and continued: "His wounds were healed, and Lebolo would have helped him to get back to the Engelsch laager, but he had forgotten that he ever wanted to go. Perhaps she had given him a love-drink. Our women are *zeer goed* at boiling them from the juice of herbs and flowers and from —other things." M'Toba spat into the fire. "But yet I do not know. She had given none to Jacobus Blind, that is certain. Yet he was mad for her."

"Who was the woman?"

"She was Lowalie, the daughter of Lebolo the King. We of the Barala did not think her *veel mooi*. She was not *zwart* as we are, but light, the colour of honey, and her hair was brown and silky as the mistress's own."

"She had brown hair and a golden skin and so the Barala did not admire her as much as the English soldier and Jacobus Blind. What was the English soldier's name?"

"It is a hard name to say, but very common amongst the *rooineks*. Bili, he told us to call him: Bili of the Desa Regiment."

"And the other man who wanted Lowalie?"

"He was the Baas Jacobus Blind."

"Who was Jacobus Blind?"

"He was not of the Booren, though he said so. He was a Kaisersman who spied the land for the *rooineks* in the war and led them—of course without meaning it—into hot places, ha, ha, ha! He was a *slim kerel!* But the way the Engelsch soldiers trusted him, *mevrouw*, that was queer. When he led them into the trap among the krantzes, they turned on him and tried to shoot him, but the bullets

from their *roers* flattened on his body and skipped off harmlessly and fell amongst the rocks?"

"Do you think Engelsch *mevrouws* believe stuff like that, M'Toba?"

"Mistress, it is true. A great witch-doctor of the Barala whose name was Kabaregga—a very *geleerd* man, had made Bantu magic for the Baas Jacobus, in return for three bullocks and a double-barrelled *roer*. I say to you, *mevrouw*, that I do not lie! I, who learned the religion Eso-Krista at the Missionary school at Mount Lodi, and was interpreter for U-Sessel-Odes in Pondoland."

The little cunning flat eyes of the Mission scholar did not inspire confidence. M'Toba stretched a hand, coffee-brown and horribly pinkish in the palm and blue about the nails, to the warmth of the camp-fire, ours, by which he had squatted. A small cold wind blew eerily from under the black cloud-bar where the sunset had burned itself out—and the pansy-purple at the zenith deepened before the coming of the great white stars. The mother in the rusty crape bonnet leaned back against the wheel of our Cape cart, and slept, her mission fulfilled, dreaming of Padbury and her dead boy. And the Boer driver lay under the cart, wrapped in a blanket, and snored like a lower-deck ventilator out of gear. M'Toba went on, having stuffed his huge nostrils with more snuff, taken from a little gourd with a horn spoon—

"The name of the daughter of Lebolo was, as I have said, Lowalie. It was well seen that she liked the *rooinek*, but what young woman wants to be reproached with having married a man who could not pay *ikasi*. You must always pay *ikasi* to the father before you can take her to your kraal. And Bili of the Desas lived but on the charity of Lebolo. Then Jacobus Blind asked for the girl Lowalie from the King, and jested, saying he would give Lebolo triple *lobola*, which means dowry: and his Cape boy came

bringing calicos and brass bracelets and beads for the bride, driving in nine fatted oxen also, and thirty fine merino sheep. Wealth is power, and Lebolo was greedy of the cattle and the fine fat ewes and wethers. But when Jacobus Blind came to fetch away the girl, she ran away and hid in the thick bush. She would never go with the Baas, she sent word by a Kaffir herd who met her crossing the *boschveld*, nor would she marry a black man. Let her father send back the Baas his cattle, and let the Baas win her in fair fight from Bili of the Desas. Then, said she, she would return, and sleep on the marriage mat with the conqueror. "Otherwise, she would throw herself from the high *krantz* he knew of, and nobody would get her but the wild dogs."

"Lowalie was a girl who knew her own mind, I think."

"And the Baas Jacobus Blind was a man who knew the mind of woman. He took back his sheep and oxen, and said to Bili of the Desas. 'You are a good shot, so am I. We will have a shooting match for the girl. I will lend you a *roer* like mine, and Mauser cartridges, and we will shoot each of us three times at a mark two hundred gun-barrel lengths away, and our mark shall be each other.'"

"He meant to fight what we English call a duel with the soldier, I suppose? And what did Billy of the Deershire Regiment say?"

"He said it was a first-class notion and that he never guessed a bloody German spy would have so much grit. Then Jacobus Blind laughed very quietly and said—

"'Wait until I have told you how we shall fight. It will be naked, with the rings of the target painted on the bare body in black, and the middle spot,' I forget what the Baas called it, speaking in Engelsch——"

"The bull's-eye."

"'The bull's eye in red. And we will stand up naked in turn for each other to shoot at, shot and shot about, three

times. And the survivor takes Lowalie, as she has said. But you must swear an oath first, like this : ' I accept the terms, Jacobus Blind, and I give myself up to be the prey of the gods of Kabaregga if I use Christian prayer, or word, or anything held holy by the Christian when I stand up, *roer* in hand, to fire at you ! ' "

" Did he take the oath ? "

" He did, Lowalie not being there to stop him. He was a foolhardy *rooinek*, very big and strong, with eyes like blue sparkling stones, a fair skin where it was not burned red, and yellow hair. Perhaps that was why the girl preferred him to Jacobus Blind, who was little and lean and black-haired, and no longer young. Women are fanciful creatures."

M'Toba took more snuff, and clicked and grunted in the Bantu for a moment. The contrast between the smooth Missionary English of his speech and his ungainly, shambling coffee-coloured, blubber-lipped, woolly-headed personality was curious.

" I should like to hear about the fight, M'Toba."

" It was a battle between a *keitloa* who is all cunning, mistress, and a buffalo who is all strength and no brains. We of the Barala knew the *rooinek* had no chance against the magic of Kabaregga. Meanwhile men were sent out to follow the spoor of Lowalie and cry the news to her from a distance, so that she might return and see the issue. Jacobus made the Chief do that. They shot at the mark next day, having spent all the evening before in marking out the distance and finding the range, and drinking our sweet millet-beer together. Bili was very fond of that. He slept when he was drunk, and the Baas went away laughing."

" And next day— ? "

" Next day we were all there at sun-high to see the shooting match. Kabaregga had come from his kraal

in the Tuli bush with his pots of red paint and black paint. If you had seen him, Mistress, in his cap of baboon skin, with his necklaces of tortoise-shells and teeth and claws of wild beasts, and the poison snake, the green *inushwa*, that houses the spirit of the god that tells him secrets, twining about his body and limbs and hissing, as it darted out its forked tongue, it may be that you would have been frightened. My heart leapt like the bush-buck at sight of the great witch-doctor. But Bili showed his teeth as he stood forth, big and white and strong, and naked, in the sun, and the women *pulla'd* with their hands before their mouths in admiration. And Kabaregga cried, beating the soles of his feet upon the ground, and rattling his dreadful charms, for Bili to come forth.

"Bili says, 'I have seen a worm in an Engelsch river stick stones and shells and twigs upon its back to frighten away the—' I do not remember the things he named——"

"Sticklebacks, perhaps."

"Mistress, it may be. Kabaregga painted Bili as the target with a red bull's-eye and three black circles, and then he drew on the body of Jacobus Blind the same figure. But he drew his red and black from another pair of calabashes, and I and others smelled mischief in the wind."

"Poison of sorts, in the stuff, do you mean?"

"No, no poison. Magic. They laid two loaded *roers* on the ground, and tossed for choice. The Baas won. Then they tossed up another *tikkie* for position, and tossed again for the first shot, and Bili laughed, because he had the sun behind him, and that was bad for the Baas. But the Baas chuckled, because he had won first shot, which was bad for Bili. Then they stood up at each end of the marked-out range of two hundred gun-barrels. A cartridge was in each barrel of their *roers* and each man had picked the third cartridge out of a box of loose ones."

"Well?"

M'Toba grunted. "Never have I seen such a fight!"

"But where was Lowalie?"

"She missed nothing of it, be sure. The *roer* of the Baas went plick-plock, and see, Bili spouts blood. A hole is drilled through the top of the ear—he being a man of jutting head-handles—that he could have put a Bantu coast-woman's lip-plug through. And Jacobus Blind cursed and swore, one told me who lay couched flat in the bush beside him, saying that Kabaregga was a cheat.

"And then it was Bili's turn. He brought up the *roer* and sighted, and that same one who lay hid told me that the bullet hit fair within the second ring of the target that was painted on the body of the Baas Jacobus, and smashed flat into a shining splash of lead as if it had hit upon a rock, and fell to the ground. And the Baas staggered a little. Then he swore bitterly, and as Bili laid down his weapon and stood up, his arms hanging at his sides, he sighted and fired again. This time the Mauser bullet passed between the left arm of the *rooinek* and his body, leaving a deep bloody furrow. And the Baas cried—

"'Kabaregga, *verdoemte* old rogue, I will have back those oxen if the third shot fails, and your god shall be drowned in a horse bucket!'

"And then the voice of Kabaregga, sounding quite near, he told me who hid in the grass, though the witch-doctor sat with the King a long way off, said—

"'Be patient, for thy hour will come at last!'

"Then Bili's second shot plick-plocked, and the bullet, aimed marvellously true, hit the Baas Jacobus in the centre of the red bull's-eye and knocked all the breath out of him."

"Without making a hole?"

"Without doing more, mistress, than bruising him a little. Now it was Bili's third shot. His cartridge, *mevrouw*, had been picked from a box of loose ones, belonging to Jacobus Blind. Now it was the custom of the Booren

when fighting in the war, to cut with the knife two cross-nicks on the end of the Mauser-bullet, so that it opened like a lily-flower when it hit, and made a very bad wound. And the bullet of the third cartridge had been crossed like this, *mevrouw*, by Jacobus or another, so that his own bullet made his own undoing. For it hit the outer edge of the red bull's-eye and made a big hole in the red-smeared hairy chest—and Jacobus fell, bubbling bloody foam as he cursed the knavery of Kabaregga, and died "

"Well, I am glad it was not the English soldier! Did he marry Lowalie?"

"*Yebo, yebo,*" M'Toba nodded vigorously, "but he got no good of the girl, none at all. For every night the ghost of Jacobus Blind came and lay on the mat beside him and put its cold stringy arms—*E'hea! E'hea!*—round his neck, so that he wasted away and died of fear. And the Barala buried him, as he asked them, where his brothers of the regiment had died. But what had he done, do you ask, Mistress? He had used white man's magic in the battle with Jacobus Blind. Was I not a pupil of the Missionaries at Mount Lodi? Do I not know that a straight stick and another straight stick across it, at the upper end, is the sign of the white man's God? And the nick in the bullet was a cross nick, so that Bili Flodee became the prey of the gods of Kabaregga."

"What did you say the English soldier's name was?"

"It is written here. The mistress will read."

M'Toba felt in the pocket of his dirty tan cords and brought out a small disc of tin. It was about the size of an English penny, and one side bore a rough inscription, cut with a knife or roughly scratched with a nail.

"1943 Pte. W. Floydie, 2nd Batt. Deershire Regt."

There were two holes in the disc, which had evidently been stitched in place of a lost company number inside a tunic. I looked at the peaceful face of Mrs. Floydie, and

was glad that she had slept through M'Toba's story, for the sake of Grace, who had joined in sending the wreath of crockery flowers.

"And what became of Lowalie?"

"Lowalie went bathing in a deep river-pool not long after Bili died, without her neck-charm, and Tikoloshi, the Water god, pulled her down to him by the feet."

My sympathies were with the woman of the Barala. Grace had not died for him.

UTUKULUK

Two men, Europeans, stood together on the outlook platform that juts from the scarred and beetling cliffs of volcanic rock that overhangs the village of Kangek, on the west coast of Greenland. One was the owner of the steam-yacht that cradled at her cables in the anchorage, the other his friend, not Charles, but Paul.

"Weather unusually mild and promising, even for June," said the owner of the yacht, shutting up his field-glass and restoring it to the leather case that hung by its strap from his broad shoulders. "Since I got bitten with the craze for cruising in these seas, I've never seen anything like it—no, nor had better sport. Milady will overlook any slight remissness in conjugal correspondence of which I may have been guilty when she sees the seal and bear and bird-skins I've got for her. There's a down rug she'll simply scream over—I shot the eider-duck myself and had 'em dressed by the village women in the proper way. The proper way is a nasty way—but Milady won't know anything about that!" He knocked the ash from his Havana, and glanced at his companion. A pucker of annoyance gathered between his eyebrows; he laughed the laugh of an annoyed man. "Upon my word, Maxhelme, I don't believe you've heard one word of all I've been saying. You grow more absent-minded and moony every day."

"I beg your pardon, Cranleigh," said Paul Maxhelme, speaking with a soft, musical, rather guttural intonation.

He withdrew his eyes from the sea; they were hazel eyes, bright and languorously dreamy in expression—and turned them upon his friend. "I—I did not hear you, it is true. I—I was thinking."

Lord Cranleigh inserted his thumb and forefinger in the pocket of his chamois waistcoat, drew therefrom a bronze medal of a familiar British type, and held it tauntingly under Maxhelme's handsome nose.

"A penny for your thoughts."

"Do you really want to hear them?" said Maxhelme, as he took the proffered coin.

Lord Cranleigh nodded.

"When I waked from sleep," said Maxhelme, in a low, distinct voice, looking out to where the smooth sea heaved in a long, rhythmed swell towards the rocky islets that fringed the shore, "Utukuluk came and called outside my hut——"

"Your hut," commented Cranleigh peevishly "Now of all the depraved and idiotic notions that a man would take into his head, that notion of yours of leaving the yacht and living ashore in a shack of skins and poles in the middle of an Eskimo village was the——"

"I crawled through the door," went on Maxhelme, who either did not hear or did not heed his friend's commentary —"and there she was with the sea-mist hanging in drops upon her eyelashes, and her shining, dimpled brown cheeks——"

"I call 'em copper-coloured," grunted Cranleigh.

"'See, Pauia,' said she, 'I have my kaiak-jacket on. Lend me a quid of tobacco to chew——'"

"There's a horrid habit for a woman, now!" Cranleigh put in.

"'For I shall not eat till I have killed, as is our custom.'"

"Raw blubber, then. Disgusting custom!" said the peer.

" ' It is for the bladder-nose seal we go hunting, upon some banks nine miles out upon the open sea; and thou, Pauia, shalt have the liver, for that is the hunting maiden's present to her love.' "

" Go slow, old chap," broke out Cranleigh, stuttering between wrath and laughter. " You've earned your penny."

Maxhelme looked at him again, with the long, soft, seal-like stare which of late had been a characteristic of his, and which filled the mind of Cranleigh with fresh food for doubt whenever he observed it.

" Have you any more ? "

" Of what are vulgarly called ' browns '—some half a dozen."

" Give them to me—all of them ! " said Maxhelme, with some show of eagerness.

" What d'ye want 'em for ? "

" Utukuluk is making a necklace—I have given her all I had, but yet she has not enough."

" Damn Utukuluk ! " murmured the much-tried Cranleigh. " However, here you are." He handed the coppers over. " They will do for a farewell present—a kind of valedictory—what's it's name ? " he said, adding with a certain degree of intention, " especially as the yacht trips anchor on Thursday."

" On Thursday ? " echoed the other, in a tone so parrot-like that Cranleigh started.

" On Thursday. We've had a pleasant two months of it, but even seal-shooting palls in time, and there's the London season nearly over, and I've promised to take Milady to Aix for the first two weeks in July. Then, again, I run Vamps for the Goodwood Cup and all he's worth on the first of August, and I must arrange my book a bit. Yes, we're getting up steam now, and by Thursday evening you'll have left Kangek and—everything connected with it—some sixty knots behind you."

Paul Maxhelme turned, then, and said very quietly—

"You will have left Kangek—*I* shall not!"

Cranleigh's light blue eyes protruded. His florid cheeks deepened to an alarmingly apoplectic hue, as he shouted—

"What the —— ! What do you mean?"

"They are making me a kaiak for the winter," said Maxhelme. "The frame has been made of white drift-wood; it will be covered with skins of seals killed by Utukuluk. She and the other women will stitch them on the frame. I will give them a great coffee-drinking when the work is done, and they will sing songs in my honour." His queer, dreamy gaze intensified; he stretched out his arm and pointed to the sea. "She is coming," he cried, pointing to a distant black speck faintly discernible upon the steely blue of the vast, heaving wilderness. "She is coming."

"I can see nothing," returned Cranleigh, biting his lip.

"Take your glass," said Paul Maxhelme. "My eyes need no help."

"You used to sport an eyeglass and talk of short sight," said Cranleigh brutally, "until the other day." He drew from its case and adjusted his glass and looked through it in silence, gnawing his underlip. "It's a kaiak, sure enough," he muttered, "but whether the creature in it is a man or a woman——" He glanced round, and swore openly. Maxhelme had vanished from his side.

A wild cry sounded from the rocky shore below. Squat, fur-clad figures emerged from the burrow-like entrances of the Eskimo houses, others appeared at the doorways of shacks of hide and wattle, newly reared with the beginning of the summer months. That most of them were women the practised eye alone might determine. A top-knot adorned with ribbon, red, white, black, or the green which goes with advanced opinions; a strip of white linen above the trouser-band, means a great deal in Greenland.

Above the bird-like crowing and clacking rose the voice of Maxhelme, strident and powerful

"Utukuluk! Aina Utukuluk Kaligpok!"

"'Kaligpok' means 'towing,' I know," snorted Cranleigh. "The Eskimo Amazon has killed a bottle-nose, I suppose, and is bringing him home in triumph. Now if she'd capsized and forgotten how to right herself again and gone to Tornasouk—I believe that's Inoit for Davy Jones—I should have been relieved of a pressing anxiety and rescued from a very doubtful dilemma. As it is—I'll write to Milady."

Considering that there were no facilities at hand for dispatching the letter, which must inevitably remain on board until the yacht should arrive at Plymouth, and which, in any case, could only arrive at Cranleigh Hall a few hours before its writer, Milady's husband might have been guilty of an idea of greater originality But the temptation to disburden his mind of the heavy secret it had carried for weeks past was irresistible to the galled and disappointed friend, who had regarded Maxhelme as his *alter ego*, his ideal companion, his pal of pals until such a little while ago. Lord Cranleigh scrambled down from Kangek's outlook-point with a lighter heart. He reached the beach as a kaiak, borne on the back of a long roller wave, darted ashore. He caught the gleam of white teeth, the shine of a broad brown face, the twinkle of two black eyes as Utukuluk's family and friends seized the tiny vessel and drew it with its freight, living and dead, above high water.

He saw her unhitch her seal-gut waterproof jacket from the kaiak ring and step out, more or less gracefully, with the aid of Maxhelme's hand. He turned away with a shudder as the maiden, ogling her admirer with undisguised admiration, handed him a piece of raw blubber cut from the scarce dead prey a short time previously, and which, her

hunger satisfied, she had hung about her neck with a piece of string. He groaned aloud.

"It is obsession. It makes one believe in witchcraft. Good Heavens! If I could have foreseen what would happen, when I asked Dorothea's intended husband to come and shoot seals in Greenland! I'd have—I'd have——"

He drew out his revolver and fired three shots as a signal to the watch on the deck of the yacht rocking peaceably at anchor in harbourage, and almost as soon, as it seemed, as the well-trained, smartly dressed crew had tumbled over the side, the white prow of his galley grated on the beach.

"Is Mr. Maxhelme coming, sir?" asked the captain of the boat. Lord Cranleigh shook his head gloomily for answer. The captain shed a diffusive wink of intelligence upon the crew, and the galley shot from the shore.

"They've winded the business, hang 'em!" thought Cranleigh, noting the childlike expression of innocence which sat on the countenances presented to his view. When he reached the yacht he went down into his cabin, mixed himself a bumper of whisky-and-soda, lighted a Partaga of extraordinary strength, and sat down to write to Milady—

"*I have kept this to myself as long as might be, hoping that the change might be a passing one. The wisest of men are sometimes carried away, as I think you will agree, my dear Mildred, by the irresistible impulse to gratify a freak, a whim, newly born, or the outcome of inherited predisposition.*"

He tore that beginning up and wrote another—

"*I am very anxious, I must at length admit, about Maxhelme, though I must trust to your discretion to keep my*

anxiety and its cause a secret from Dorothea. Every one—including ourselves—to whom Maxhelme is known, are apt to regard him as a refined, super-sensitive, highly cultured man, to whom crudeness of speech, coarseness of manner, are infinitely repulsive; who would as soon devour tainted food as highly-flavoured literature, whose artistic tastes are irreproachably well balanced, and whose appreciation of the feminine charm is as super-subtle and exquisite as that of the skilled musician whose ear revels in the harmony of a concerto of Greig or a sonata of Rubenstein, to which the ignorant listen dully and without delight."

So far he had not conveyed any information of a startling kind. It occurred to him that the sentence was rather neatly turned. It would have been a pity to tear it. He went on—

"*Can you imagine a man such as this having fallen victim to a brutal infatuation for a savage? Incredible as it may sound, it is the case. In the first month of our arrival in this infernal country, Maxhelme behaved just as any other sensible fellow would, under the circumstances. He is not passionately addicted to sport, but he is a fair shot, and gave a good account of himself where seal and feathered game were concerned. Then—professing a desire to study the manners and customs of the aborigines—he went to live ashore for a week, while I took the yacht on a coasting trip farther west. I was absent three weeks. Upon my return I discovered to my surprise that Maxhelme had taken up his abode in an Eskimo tent* (*a dwelling, to do him justice, less disagreeable than one of the underground family burrows, whose interiors present such curious phases of domestic barbarism to the civilised observer*). *He had taken kindly to Eskimo language, Eskimo food—which is generally raw and almost always indescribable—Eskimo dress—adapting his*

own to the exigencies of native fashion—and Eskimo women—at least one of them, a girl called Utukuluk!

"*She is a black-haired, berry-eyed creature, squat in figure, with a broad, shiny brown face, and teeth white as ivory and sharp enough to—well, to fulfil the many uses to which teeth are put in these regions. She has semi-masculine tastes, manages the kaiak as well as any man, hunts and kills fox, bear and seal, spears birds and fish, and is not destitute of lighter accomplishments. I have heard her chant her own praises to the accompaniment of a fish-skin drum, played by herself, and the tones were, though odd, not unpleasing. But imagine Maxhelme delighted by such cacophony! Yet it is the case. He thinks of nothing, talks of nothing, but this creature. He has to-day refused to leave her, though I have told him positively that the yacht sails on Thursday. He may persist and remain, with the chance of being taken off, before the winter sets in, by some American whaler! He may yield and return with me if he chooses—you will see that strong measures are out of the question with a man of full age. But, even if he should give up this horrible freak, I tremble for the effect the sight of him may produce upon Dorothea. He is so oddly changed! He begins, upon my honour, to look like an Eskimo himself. Soap has become a luxury to which he—once the pink of delicate cleanliness—has become indifferent. And he has developed a liking for animal food in the uncooked state.*"

He recalled the picture of Maxhelme setting his teeth with savage relish in Utukuluk's gift of blubber.

"*Can it be,*" he went on, "*that contact with frank, unconscious barbarians has developed some tendency, hitherto latent, in Maxhelme's character? Ask yourself this question, which is ever present with me. Or—is there any strain of insanity in his blood which has only now, under the pressure*

of a rigorous climate and gloomy and savage associations, become apparent? Lose no time in ascertaining, for Dorothea's sake; we must, at any cost, save her from——"

"What the devil do you want?"

The steward stood before the writing-table repeating for the third time, in respectful tones, that a person begged leave of a word with my lord.

"A person! What kind of a person, Jenkins?"

"A native, my lord," said Jenkins.

"Is the interpreter on board? You know I can't speak ten words of their infernal lingo," growled the peer.

"The interpreter is at 'is tea," said Jenkins; "but I can call him, and—I forgot to say, my lord, the man have brought a note from Mr. Maxhelme."

The note was a folded piece of ruled paper, evidently torn from a note-book, and with the greasy proof impression of Eskimo thumbs upon it. It bore some half-dozen pencilled words, which Cranleigh perused, and dropped the missive, with something like a howl of rage.

"He's sent for his clothes and guns and things. He's going to be married to this infernal native woman by the Scotch Episcopal Missionary from Gortchuk, and turn savage. He tells me this coolly, confound him! without a word of his engagement to Doroth—— Get out! confound you! and tell the beast who brought this to get out or I'll have him thrown overboard!"

"You can't drown these creeturs, my lord," interposed Jenkins sadly; "they can swim like fish; and if they couldn't, they're that oily that there'd be no gettin' 'em to sink. But we've some irons on board, my lord. Shall I put 'em on him?"

"What for, you fool?"

"We could take 'im back to England and give him to a show," Jenkins suggested.

But Lord Cranleigh did not smile. He went up on deck looking very black and thunderous. A strong smell of fish and train-oil guided him to where a dumpy little Eskimo in a fur hood and bird-skin jumper was sitting on a cask, smiling from ear to ear.

"He wants to speak to the master of the big smoke-boat," said the interpreter, who had been summoned from his tea, and came wiping his mouth on his sleeve.

"Let him say what he has got to say," said the "smoke-boat's" indignant proprietor. "And don't put it in your way; I've had enough of your flowery periods. Translate literally, do you hear?"

"All right, my lord," said the interpreter, bolting his last mouthful of biscuit. Several sailors, bursting with curiosity, found themselves business in the immediate neighbourhood, as the Eskimo delivered himself of a long, cackling, grunting harangue in the vernacular. Rendered into indifferent English, the gist of it ran as follows—

"Master of the English smoke-boat, a poor man of Kangek desires to empty his stomach——"

"Heart, it must be," said Lord Cranleigh.

"Same word stands for both organs, I guess, in Eskimo," said the interpreter, who was an American.

"He wants to unload his stomach at your feet. Pauia —he whom you brought with you—is to marry the girl Utukuluk to-night, and there will be seal's liver, and bil-berries cooked in train-oil, with other delicacies, for the wedding feast."

"Oh!" groaned the distracted Cranleigh.

"Therefore Pauia made witch marks on a piece of thin bark with a pointed stick."

"He means, wrote on a bit of paper with a pencil," moaned Cranleigh.

"And bade he who speaks bear it to the master of the smoke-boat for a reward of seal's entrails, of which he is desirous, as his wife is sick. But this marriage of Pauia's with the girl Utukuluk is a great injustice, and therefore he who speaks carries a heavy stone in his—in his inside."

"Why? Ask him why, Hansen!"

"He says that the girl Utukuluk is already promised in marriage to his son."

An unutterable sensation of relief relaxed Lord Cranleigh's tense nerves. He cried eagerly—

"If she's promised to his son, why on earth doesn't his son marry her? Tell him that if poverty stands in the way, I will make that all right. I'll give his son a bale of sail-cloth, five pounds of tobacco, and a keg of rum. What does he say? Hurry up, you Yankee snail!"

"He says that your lordship's benevolent words fill his stom—his heart with gratitude, but——"

"Well?"

"But he hain't got nary son."

"WHAT?"

A circle of gaping mouths, staring eyes and greedy ears had openly gathered on the yacht's quarter-deck about the group of three.

"Get forward, you!" said the sailing-master, in obedience to a sign from Lord Cranleigh, and the men tumbled forward. Hansen addressed a rapid question to the Eskimo, and, on receiving a reply, doubled up with laughter.

"Don't grin, you Cheshire cat!" shrieked the maddened Cranleigh. "Make him explain. How can Utukuluk be engaged to marry his son if he hasn't got one?"

The Eskimo replied, *per medium* of Hansen—

"Seventeen springs ago I married. On the same day, Ituk, the friend of my boyhood, took a wife. Then when

our hearts were warm with love and eating, we made a promise. Said I: 'O Ituk, my wife shall have a son.' Said he: 'O Ikloo, my wife shall have a daughter.' Then I said: 'My son shall marry thy daughter when he is seventeen years old.' And he also said: 'When my daughter is seventeen years old she shall wed thy son.' And we made this oath upon the drum of Jug Jak, the Father of Whales, so that it might not be broken. And in due time it came to pass as Ituk had said, and his wife bore a daughter. But my wife gave me neither daughter nor son. Therefore I was not sorry when the woman fell over a high place, and I took me a new wife in her stead. And, by to-morrow I shall be a father. Therefore I pray that this marriage may be delayed—at least for two sleeps. For if the baby proves a son, then Utukuluk is his lawful spouse; and such a union is very desirable, seeing that the girl is rich, and a woman who can hunt and kill game as well as a man."

"Tell him that the marriage of Pauia shall be delayed," said Lord Cranleigh. "And say that if the baby turns out to be a boy, I will give the sailcloth, the tobacco and the rum as a present to the father and mother. Tell him"—he leaned heavily on the interpreter's shoulder—"*that it must be a boy!* Make him understand that clearly, and this——" He drew a handful of silver dollars from his pocket and clinked them invitingly. "*Does* he understand?"

"He says," returned the interpreter, "that if it is not a boy, he will beat his wife severely."

"For goodness' sake, no! But if the brat turns out to be a girl, and his wife should happen to be acquainted with a more fortunate lady in the same situation, *they might exchange*, that's all. Hansen, if you betray my confidence in this matter I'll have your Yankee accent cut out of you with a blunt knife. Tell Ikloo, too, that if he lets slip to

Pauia or anybody else about this business he'll get nothing from me. Now give him this note to Mr. Maxhelme, and let him go."

The note was hurriedly scrawled. It was singularly mild in tenour. Lord Cranleigh regretted the step his friend seemed so bent on taking, but could not deny himself the privilege of being present at the wedding, which he ventured to beg might be deferred to the following afternoon, when he hoped to put in an appearance. He remained. with kind regards and best wishes to the future Mrs. Maxhelme, his dear Maxhelme's old friend, Bob.

"Because you can't resent an insult from a man who's clean gone in the head, as you can from one who isn't dotty," said Cranleigh. "Of course, Dorothea would never dream of marrying him, after this; but I may as well save him for somebody who isn't a savage."

* * * * * *

"We must wait until to-morrow, little ugly one," said Maxhelme, on receipt of the missive. He was sitting with Utukuluk upon an empty cask, which had once contained a Fur Company's trade brandy, outside the door of her family dwelling.

"I had rather not wait," said Utukuluk naïvely, glancing down at her new sealskin trousers with an appreciative eye. "Is not the Christian *angakok* from Gortchuk here? And if we wait, he may go away again in his big boat, and never come back for a year, and then it may even be with me as with Toukoo, my cousin, who was confirmed, and married, and her baby baptised all in one day. What is the man of the smoke-boat to thee that thou shouldst put off our wedding to please him?"

"I do not know," said Maxhelme absently. "He was my friend when I was a boy, and he has a sister——" His voice died away dreamily. He stared out vacantly over the rocky beach, across the heaving, steely-blue

water, to where the crimson-hued disc of the Arctic sun was glowing through a veil of lilac mist.

"What is his sister like?" questioned Utukuluk. "Has she a lovely flat face and black hair like mine?" She rubbed her squat little nose against Maxhelme's shoulder, as he held her furry little form in a loose embrace.

"No. She is not like thee," said Maxhelme. "She is like . . . I cannot remember what she is like, but I know that she is beautiful."

"Thou knowest nothing, Seal Eyes!" said Utukuluk sharply.

"Perhaps not," admitted Maxhelme.

"It is time we went in," said Utukuluk, raising her oily coiffure from Maxhelme's shoulder. "They will all be gathered about the lamps for the evening meal, and there is to be coffee to-night, black, bitter coffee." She smacked her plump lips with anticipative enjoyment of the treat. "Go thou down first, Seal Eyes, and I will follow."

Maxhelme obediently crawled down the tunnel which led to the underground residence of Utukuluk's family. His betrothed was about to follow him when a squat little figure glided from behind a heap of fishy refuse and plucked her by the hood.

"What message," asked Ikloo, for it was that worthy, "am I to give the smoke-boat man?"

"The marriage will be to-morrow," snapped Utukuluk.

"*Kuk!*" said Ikloo, with an irrepressible chuckle of satisfaction. "I wish thee luck."

"I wish thee the faceache!" said Utukuluk, "and thy new wife is no better than a maid, with such a husband as thou. Have I not lived unmarried because of thee? Have the young men not kept aloof from me because they say I am the wife of Ikloo's son, the son who was never born, and they feared lest when they went a-hunting the ghost of

He Who Should Have Been might rise up out of the sea and pull their kaiaks down?"

"The Englishman—the Kablunak—does not fear," said Ikloo, with something like a wink. "How is it thou hast bewitched him? Didst thou brew the red moss into a drink and give it him when he was athirst?"

"Sh-sh!" cried Utukuluk. "Not so loud!"

"I knew it was so," chuckled Ikloo. "Only a fool of a foreigner would have taken drink from thy bowl, thou witch—and become more of a fool than ever."

But the sarcasm was unheard. Utukuluk's head and shoulders had already disappeared into the bowels of the earth. Ikloo went home to interview his new wife, the condition of whose health, you will remember, gave some little cause for anxiety.

That estimable lady, though, made her appearance at the Mission chapel upon the following morning, when the friends and relatives of Utukuluk mustered in force to see the wedding. The Scotch Episcopalian Missionary from Gortchuk wore a ragged black gown over his fur coat. The Fur Company's agent figured as best man. His nose was red from frequent potations, but on the whole he made an imposing appearance. Lord Cranleigh arrived on the heels of the bride and bridegroom.

"Phew!" said he, for the combined odours of fish, train-oil and furs imparted a singular raciness to the atmosphere. He held his handkerchief over his nose as he addressed a last appeal to Maxhelme.

"Paul," he said, in muffled accents, "it's not too late to pull up. For the last time, old man, before making a hopeless idiot of yourself, will you or will you not?"

But Maxhelme moved up the little aisle without even looking at his friend. His blushing bride led the way. The Scotch Missionary mopped his shining countenance with a red cotton handkerchief, and demanded whether

the matrimonial aspirants before him were single. He was obliged to make this inquiry because several of his converts, in their newly awakened enthusiasm for the ordinances of the Christian Church, and going upon the principle that it is not possible to have too much of a good thing, had had themselves married three or four times over.

"I have no wife," said Paul Maxhelme tonelessly, in answer to the repeated question.

"I have no husband," said Utukuluk, "as all here know. Speak for me, my father Ituk."

Ituk waddled out of the tightly packed congregation, grinning oleaginously and rubbing his ear.

"Speak not, Ituk," cried a voice, "until thou art sure. Thy daughter hath a husband—the husband thou didst choose for her before her birth!"

"*Kuk!*" grunted Ituk, scratching his head. "How can that be, Ikloo, seeing that thy son was never born?"

"He was born last night," shouted Ikloo, shouldering his way through the crowd in high excitement, with the new Mrs. Ikloo following at his heels.

"And so, O Ituk, is the oath made good. Give me the boy, wife," and Mrs. Ikloo produced from the recesses of her sealskin hood and handed to its proud parent a very diminutive, very red baby. Ikloo held the tiny creature up above his head and shouted—

"*Here is the husband of Utukuluk!*"

* * * * * *

Lord Cranleigh finished his letter to Milady that same evening. I subjoin its conclusion to this veracious story—

"*When the thunderbolt fell—an event which took place amidst uproarious acclamations—Miss Utukuluk went as near swooning as an Eskimo belle ever does. Maxhelme refused to leave her, or to accept the situation, and upon my—very*

unwisely—employing force, he came out of his comatose, submissive condition and fought with us all like the lunatic he has been for two months past. It took eight of my men to get him to the yacht and down into his cabin. We tied him down in his bunk and put a watch over him, and then, upon the advice of the little Eskimo—Miss Utukuluk's father-in-law elect—I went on shore to interview the young lady.

" I found her nursing her husband by the fire. She seemed quite contented and resigned to the situation. ' It is true, as you say, that I gave the stupid Englishman something to make him fall in love with me,' she said. ' I put it in his coffee every now and then. Why not ? None of our young men would marry me—and every girl ought to have a husband. But now that I have got mine, give Pauia some of the yellow powder in this bag '—she handed me a fish-bladder tied at the neck with a piece of twisted grass—' and he will not want to marry me any more. Go away now, for my husband wants to sleep.' And she popped a piece of raw blubber into the brat's mouth and he dozed off, sucking at it quite contentedly. I do not think it will be her fault if he does not grow up. Utukuluk is a young woman of very decided character.

" Maxhelme is steadily coming round. The yellow powder has already nullified the effects of the infernal doses administered by his Eskimo inamorata. At this rate he will be well by the time we arrive at Leith.

" Say nothing to Dorothea.

" Your affectionate husband,

" Bob."

HOW YAMKO MARRIED FOURTEEN WIVES

Yamko was the bravest youth of his tribe and the best hunter. All women loved Yamko, and every unmarried girl, when she combed her hair with a wooden fork, and tied her topknot up with a new red ribbon—which every self-respecting and cleanly-minded maiden should do once in the six-months' day—hoped in its beauty to entangle the heart of Yamko. For who could help loving and desiring to wed a young man who brought home walrus and seal or halibut from every hunting?

Now the secret of Yamko's success in hunting, whereby he gained such riches of bone, ivory, meat and blubber, was that the youth had become possessed of a powerful charm which gave impetus to his *kaiak* and sharpness to his weapons. It was bestowed upon him in early youth by an old woman towards whom Yamko had shown benevolence. For upon beholding her painfully about to commence climbing a high and stony cliff whose brink overhung a rocky shore, the boy, with the curiosity of childhood, inquired the reason of her pilgrimage.

"For, surely, old woman," said he, "the hard snow on the level ice is easier to the footsteps of one so decrepit as thou?" Upon which the old woman opened her toothless mouth, and said—

"O intelligent and amiable youth, I climb that I may climb no more. For I am old and past labour, nor are these eyes of mine, bleared and nearly sightless, able to recognise the hunters coming back from the sea when they

are more than a mile distant from the shore. Nor are these arms of mine, crippled and knotted by rheumatism, of use to row the woman-boat. Therefore my portion of food is grudged me, and mine is a bitter lot!" And she explained to Yamko that she meant to make away with herself by jumping from the high cliff down upon the boulders below. Whereupon the youth said—

"O ancient one! thou sayest well. For by this meritorious act thou wilt descend to heaven, in the hot and beautiful regions below the earth, where the souls of the blessed suck blubber and drink train-oil for evermore; while the spirits of the lost, in the shape of the Northern Lights, wander in the cold vast heavens throughout eternity, playing football with a walrus-head in the vain effort to gain a little warmth."

And the virtuous youth led the venerable woman up the steep cliff, and supplied the place of a son to the childless by throwing her respectfully over. And the crone, ere he did the deed, bestowed upon him her blessing and a piece of a mad bear's gall, with which, if one shall rub his weapons, success infallibly attends their use. And Yamko, by this charm, became in time wealthy, and bore the name of a mighty hunter. And people said "he has a *tornak*, or familiar spirit," and paid him great respect.

Now one very hard winter, when the Snow Spirit produced much snow by whittling a walrus tusk and letting the shavings fall broadcast over land and sea, and game was scarce and the stone cooking-pots stood cold and empty, the chief Angakok of the tribe, who was a very cunning and powerful magician, heard a growling in his stomach, which when he bent down his head to listen, he recognised as the voice of his *tornak*, or familiar demon.

And the *tornak* was complaining of his empty quarters, and saying—

"Meat! Give me food, O Angakok! or I shall leave

thee, and thou wilt lose thy power and become a byword and a laughing stock to the Angakok. *Tornaks* must be fed—dost thou not know it ? "

And the Angakok cried—

" O Invisible Inhabiter ! where is meat to be had ? Tell me, and I will procure it ! "

Upon which the *tornak* cried—

" Yamko has plenty in his house. The lamps are full of train-oil ; his mother and father and his relations sit happy, greasy, and well-fed around the stone cooking-pots, while here I sit starving in this empty cave of thine."

And the *tornak* growled and barked and raged so furiously that the Angakok was driven forth, running on elbows and knees over the snow as swiftly as a wolf, until he came to Yamko's house, and, plunging down the tunnel, thrust his frightful matted head in between the skin curtains, and glared upon the company, so that the guests who squatted round the cooking-pot left off chewing, and cried in affright—

" What wouldst thou, O Angakok ? "

And the Angakok cried, dribbling clear water at the chops, and gnashing his teeth horribly—

" Meat and blubber for my *tornak !* "

And he separated his jaws, and showed his gaping maw, and Yamko the Benevolent threw in a large lump of seal's liver, saying—

" Take this, O Angakok, and bid thy spirit live ! "

And the Angakok swallowed the lump of liver, and his *tornak* devoured it instantly, and then howled for more, not being appeased. Whereupon Yamko took a long strip of blubber and rolled it up in a ball, and threw it to the Angakok, who gulped it instantly. But the voracious *tornak* made short work of it, and demanded yet more, raging so furiously in his greed and hunger that Yamko cried—

"Take yet this, and begone, lest generosity grow weary!"

And he heaved up a joint of walrus meat, half cooked and tough, and pushed it between the jaws of the Angakok, and the *tornak* fell upon it and gobbled it up without ceremony. But as soon as he had disposed of the gift his roarings became louder than ever, and, worried with this importunity, Yamko the Strong caught up the stone cooking-pot, half full as it was of meat, blubber, and oil, and hurled it after the joint, crying—

"Take that, thou Fatiguer of Charity! and get thee hence! or I will cast thee forth, *tornak* and all!"

But there was upon Yamko's hand some of the mad bear's gall, and the cooking-pot thrown by the mighty hunter dashed out the brains of the Angakok, and the *tornak*, howling and but half appeased, was driven forth upon the air to seek another home. And the family of Yamko tore their hair and scratched their faces with their nails, until the blood ran down, crying, "He has slain an Angakok! Woe, woe!"

For to kill an Angakok is an unspeakable crime. And their wailings rent the air, and others of the tribe came running and drew up the Angakok by the feet out of the doorway of Yamko's house, and found his head broken like an auk's egg and his *tornak* gone.

Now Yamko must be punished for his crime. So the other Angakoks and the head men of the tribe assembled together in the greatest family-house, and took off their clothes, and put on the masks made to resemble the faces of bears and foxes, walrus and wolves, and beat on magic drums, dancing and howling until the sweat ran down in rivers. This they did to invoke Tornasouk, and ascertain the punishment that must be meted forth to Yamko, whom they set upon a stone in the middle. And when they had danced and howled sufficiently, they thrust a spear forth

into the darkness outside the house, and when they drew the weapon back it was dyed red, and this signified that they should kill Yamko. And the cry arose: "Death!"

Upon which Tupik, an aged Angakok of great good sense and amiability, exclaimed—

"Shall we slay him who fills our pots in times of scarcity? The hunter who never returns without spoil? Thrust forth the spear again!"

And they beat upon the drums and danced with howlings, and the spear was wiped clean and thrust forth and came back as before, wetted with smoking blood, both blade and part of the shaft.

And Ituk, an Angakok of even greater wisdom than Tupik, cried aloud, saying—

"O Tornasouk, wilt thou slay us? For the life of Yamko is the life of the tribe. The fisher who never baits but he catches, we cannot spare. Thrust out the spear for the third time!"

And the drummers drummed, and the dancers danced, and the howlers howled, and the spear was cleaned and thrust forth for the third and last time and drawn back reddened from the point to the grip. This meant that Tornasouk was not to be appeased. And in great dismay the head men conferred together until Piutek, an aged and very cunning Angakok, who had not before spoken, proposed that a lifelike wooden image should be made of Yamko, clad in his clothes, and besmeared with blood let from a vein of the hunter's arm, and that this should be cast forth to Tornasouk and the angry spirits instead of the true corpse of Yamko.

And this was done, and the ensanguined image cast forth outside the house. And the angry demons hurled themselves upon it yelling, and tore it into shreds and devoured it, and departed rejoicing.

But that night the Earth was shaken so that its

covering of ice cracked and split, and from the bowels of a great basin at the top of a high mountain belched smoke and steam and fire. And a powerful voice, so terrifying that those Eskimos who heard it fell flat down upon their faces, cried, " Ho ! who has given me wood to eat ? Ho ! who has given me wood to eat ? " And the Angakok discovered from these signs that the great god Tornasouk had a stomach-ache and was grievously angry with those who had deceived him.

" Lest Greenland be destroyed," said they, " Yamko must be sacrificed. Come, let us banish him out from among us, then Tornasouk may do with him what he will ! But because Yamko is beloved of us, we will not deprive him of his *kaiak*, nor his weapons and fishing-lines nor his tent. And he shall have a wife to share his exile, to cook for him, chew his skins and comb his hair."

Thus said Tupik the Hoary, Ituk the Aged, and Piutek the Venerable, after consultation.

" But we must not anger Tornasouk further by indulging him in the choice of a help-meet," added Piutek. " Let the maidens of the tribe be called upon to supply a volunteer for the solace of the exile."

And the maidens of the tribe were convened. There were fourteen of them, all marriageable, and all lovely, with seals' eyes, small flat noses, and round, greasy cheeks. All wore their best trousers of sealskin, their parkis were embroidered with quills and strips of dyed leather, and their topknots were newly tied up with red ribbon.

" Oh ! my sisters," cried Piutek, " speak ! Or, if ye are too modest, let her step forward who elects to become the bride of him who has incurred the wrath of Tornasouk, the mighty hunter Yamko ! "

But the maidens, standing in a circle round Yamko, tittered, saying " Cluck ! " and, in pity of their modesty, the venerable Angakok ordered the lamps to be covered

with stone cooking-pots, that the house might be plunged in darkness when the self-elected virgin should take the fateful step.

And this was done: and the lamps covered and then uncovered at a signal from Piutek, and the whole assembly shouted with one voice, for fourteen maidens hung like a garland around the neck of Yamko, the Seal Slayer.

And though the young men of the tribe uttered loud complaints, Yamko was wedded to his fourteen wives, and banished from the village with beating of drums.

And the hunter cried—

"Not for long do we part, O! old men, my fathers! and O! young men, my brothers! For I go to seek counsel of the Old Woman who Dwells under the Sea with regard to the appeasing of Tornasouk, and having learned from her how to regain the favour of the Mighty One, I shall betake myself to him. And having obtained his pardon for the slaughter of the greedy Chief Angakok, I shall return and hunt for you. Till then—tighten your trouser-bands, and chew old straps, should hunger assail you too sharply!"

And he left them to do this, and quickly harnessed his fourteen wives to his sledge, and, placing his *kaiak* upon it, sat therein and went away swiftly northwards. The ice was good, and the fourteen wives were willing. The journey of ten days was accomplished in one; while three moons shone to light Yamko on his way, and the spirits of the lost warred in the cold violet vault of heaven with lances of leaping flame, yellow, green, and red. Vast was the ice-plain over which the hunter sped, drawn by his fourteen wives. He cracked the long whip in jest, and the plaited thong shot out hissing over the girls' heads.

"Pr-r-r, pr-r-r!" Wonderful was the speed. The best team of dogs ever pupped could not have outstripped Yamko's fourteen brides.

Now the floe plain stretched away on all sides; no trace

of land was seen; Yamko knew that here was the stopping-place, and he pulled up the bride-team and leaped from the sleigh. And the brides brought frozen blubber and dried fish, and served their lord, and they ate together and were merry, forgetting to make an offering to the Spirits of the place. And so it happened that as they sat in a circle round the food which was spread upon a reindeer-hide, the massy ice beneath was shivered at a blow, and the head of a bull-walrus rose up in the midst of them so suddenly that Yamko's fourteen wives fell over on their backs. And the walrus stared with round red eyes and snorted, churning foam with his tusks, and cried in a deep voice of anger—

" Who are ye that eat and are merry, forgetting to make oblations to the Spirits of the Winds and the Powers of the Depths ? "

And he sank down roaring, and with him the reindeer-skin with the meat upon it, and Yamko's wives bewailed the lost blubber with many tears.

But Yamko cheered them, and bade them make a rope by knotting the leather sleigh-traces, and this they did, and they tied an iron kettle to the end and lowered it into the hole in the ice, and the kettle sank fathoms down, but found no bottom. Then Yamko bade the brides cut up the skins into thongs, and they added those to the rope, and yet it was not long enough; and then they took of their garments what might be spared, and lengthened the rope, but the kettle did not scrape on the sludge !

Then Sadka, the prettiest of Yamko's wives, without more ado untied her hair-ribbon, undid her topknot, cut off her hair with a knife and added it to the rope, and the thirteen other brides followed her example, for virtue and piety were in them all; thus, when the last braid was added to the rope the kettle bumped on hard bottom, fathoms and fathoms below. And Yamko said—

" Hold the rope fast and wait for three pulls and a half

pull before ye haul the kettle up, though I tarry till the Sun rise and the bergs calve and the ice begins to pack. Else will I lay my dog-whip about ye till the fur flies when I return!"

And the wives cried: "We will obey, O honourable and greasy one!"

And Yamko rubbed noses with them and went down the rope. Many fathoms deep the hero descended, and ever as he went he met schools of whales and shoals of halibut and herring, and flocks of sea-birds, the auk and the gull, the gannet and the kittiwake, swimming upwards from the boiling depths, and with them all the sea-animals, the seal, the walrus, the narwhal, and the sea-cow. And when he had reached bottom and found the kettle, Yamko put a great stone in it and tightened his trouser-band and went his way, meeting the upward rush of fish and fowl and sea-creatures as it grew thicker until he came to the house of Sidnè, the Old Woman of the Sea.

And the Old Woman sat beside a burning lamp under which there stood a saucer to catch the drippings of oil, and in this saucer swam the gulls and the gannets, the auks and the kittiwakes; and out of it proceeded the schools of whale and shoals of halibut and other fishes, and the vast herds of seal and walrus. And the eyes of the Old Woman were large and round, and yellow as two moons, and her hood was a yawning gulf wherein mountains might have been swallowed up, and her hand was as large as the tail-fin of a whale. And she beheld Yamko peering over the edge of her saucer, and cried with a terrible voice—

"Who art thou, O visitor, greatly daring, who settest foot in the Regions Below the Sea?" And Yamko spread his hands upon his stomach and bent himself respectfully, saying—

"Yamko the Hunter is my name. And because I slew a greedy Angakok with too hard a morsel and drove his

tornak homeless on the air, I myself am driven forth from my village by the anger of Tornasouk. And I would learn from thee how the Mighty One may be appeased."

And Sidnè, the Old Woman, stirred a bubbling cauldron with live seals in it, and said—

"Willingly. But first thou must taste my broth!"

And the ladle she held forth to Yamko was as large as a woman-boat, and the steam that of a boiling mountain lake, and the morsels that bobbed in the hot liquor were live seals.

But Yamko was cunning, and affected much anger, saying, "How, Old Woman, is it that you offer to feed a stranger from a spoon? Tip up the cauldron that I may drink my fill. By Jug Jak, the Father of all Whales, I vow not to leave a single drop in it once I begin!"

And the Old Woman was miserly, and wanted her broth for herself; and therefore she spake and said—

"Leave me my broth, for I am old and nearly blind, and I will tell thee how to appease Tornasouk. But first thou must take from me one little box upon the ears."

And Yamko saw that the hand of the Old Woman was as the tail-flipper of a whale. And he was cunning, and fetched the iron kettle, and held it up and bade the Old Woman strike. And Sidnè struck, and the iron kettle was flattened like a dried fish. Now she rejoiced, thinking she had abolished the inquirer, but Yamko laughed and cried aloud—

"Are these thy boxes on the ears? Surely I deemed a midge had bitten me, no more. Hasten now, and tell me how Tornasouk may be appeased, for I stay not long here."

And the Old Woman was astonished and said, "I will tell thee, I will tell thee. But my head itches and thou must scratch it. Climb on my shoulders, that is the easier way."

This she said, meaning that Yamko should fall into her hood and be for ever lost. But he, understanding her

wiliness, climbed to the roof of the hut above, taking with him his harpoon, and the stone out of the iron kettle. And there was a hole in the roof of the hut to let out the lamp smoke; and Yamko poised the harpoon and hurled it so that it was buried to the butt-end in the Old Woman's head, and as he did this he dropped the stone into her hood.

And the Old Woman was pleased, for her head had not been so well scratched for long; and she thought the stone that fell into her hood was Yamko, and Yamko favoured the thought, crying, "O, ho! I shall never get out! O, ho! I shall never get out!"

And the Old Woman exulted, crying, "Never, indeed! So, as the secret will be no use to thee, I shall tell thee how Tornasouk might have been appeased. If thou hadst found a fair woman in whom the virtues and the gifts of twice seven should be united, and if thou hadst mounted with her to the summit of the mountain that belched fire when the wrath of Tornasouk was aroused against thee, and made an offering of her to the Hoary-With-Ages, together with men-babes twice seven in number, equal of age, and borne of her at one birth, the Ancient Father would have pardoned thee, and all should have gone well!"

Upon which Yamko came forth and did obeisance, spreading his hands upon his stomach, and the Old Woman of the Sea squalled in her anger and tore her hair with her long nails, and upset the saucer of birds and beasts and fishes on the the ground, crying—

"Who taught thee thy cunning? Who taught thee thy cunning?"

And Yamko replied: "The wolf and the bear. For the wolf shows his bushy tail beyond the edge of the hummock, so that the hunter may loose his dart against it, thinking it is his head; and the bear it is that rolls a stone into the trap, and then claws out the meat." And he soothed the Old Woman, paying her compliments such as females covet,

and she was won to smiles, asking: "Since when didst thou learn to manage women?"

And Yamko answered: "Since I married fourteen wives."

And the Old Woman asked: "And canst thou keep all these in peace, pulling well together, and not scratching and squabbling?"

And Yamko told her how he drove the brides as his sledge-team, and how the greatest harmony prevailed amongst them. Yet the Old Woman said—

"I will wager thee a dried fish to a fish dried, that, be this as it may, thou wilt find them quarrelling!"

And Yamko said: "Not so, O Aged and Unsavoury, but waiting for me round the ice-hole."

And he hastened back to the rope, and gave it three pulls and half a pull, and a long pull came back, and Yamko went up as he came down, and found Sadka and the other brides waiting. And he rubbed noses with them in affability, saying, "Be esteemed for obedience. Three sleeps have I been away!"

And Sadka said: "Nay, but three years! For three times the ice has cracked and broken up since thou didst depart, leaving us islanded upon a floe, and three times has it frozen again. And in further proof here be fourteen babes of three years, my sisters' babes, and mine." And each of the fourteen brides held up a man-babe that spoke, and called Yamko "Father!"

And Yamko wept for joy, and embraced his sons, and ate with his wives and children the last piece of dried meat left of the store, and Sadka spoke and said: "Now, O our husband, tell us whether Tornasouk has pardoned thee? For we desire to return to our native village that we may dwell with thee and thy children in peace for the rest of our lives."

And Yamko wept, and told the brides that Tornasouk

might never be softened towards him until offering should be made to the Hoary-With-Ages in the shape of one fair woman owning the gifts, graces, and virtues of twice seven in number; and with her, fourteen babes of her body, born at one birth.

And thirteen of the brides of Yamko wept and hullabalooed, deeming that the Old Woman had jested with Yamko, but Sadka laid her finger to her head and pondered.

And she spake, saying, "This can be done, O honourable husband, I swear it by thy great boots! Behold, in the three years of thy absence, we, thy fourteen wives, who loved one another dearly in the beginning, have become entwined in the bonds of affection, so that our souls and bodies are as one. And by the unseen Will, which moves Things Seen, and the Spirit that hath power over the Flesh, we, who are all but one, may become one, and we will prove it to thee." And she called the thirteen other brides to her, and whispered to them, and they untied their top-knots and loosened their hair, which had grown long in the three years of Yamko's absence, and clasped each other's waists. And they spun round in a circle, singing a strange song with groanings in it, and beat in rhythm with their feet, and ever as they spun quicker the circle grew smaller, until of fourteen women but one remained; and she was beautiful and virtuous with the virtue and beauty of them all. And she and Yamko embraced, rubbing noses, and she bade him load the sledge with the fourteen man-babes, and mount thereon, and, seizing the traces, sped away with the swiftness of the whole fourteen, nor did she slacken in her pace until the village was in sight.

And Yamko hailed, and the elder men and women came forth with rejoicings, and cried, "Here is Yamko come back! but who is this wondrous fair woman dragging a sledge with fourteen babes, and where are thy fourteen wives?" And Yamko told the story, and the parents of

the fourteen brides embraced the woman he brought with him, saying, "This eye was my daughter's!" "This nose I remember!" "This ear, this cheek, belonged to mine! Welcome!" And they loaded their daughters with gifts and caresses, and rejoiced with gladness.

And when the rejoicings were over, Yamko placed his wife upon a sledge with the fourteen men-babes, and drew her to the summit of the fire-belching mountain, and bowed to the ground and said: "O Hoary-With-Ages, hear!"

And fire and smoke belched from the mountain, and the voice of Tornasouk answered in awful thunderings, saying, "Feared thou not my wrath, O presuming one? Wherefore hast thou returned from banishment?"

And Yamko spread his hands upon his stomach and cried: "For atonement! With oblation!" and Tornasouk grumbled, "Who told thee of atonement and oblation? O miserable! thou hast been pumping the Old Woman of the Sea."

And Yamko cried: "By art I gained the knowledge. And now, behold the woman that is fair with the fairness and virtuous with the virtue of twice seven virtuous fair ones, and look upon these fourteen men-babes, born of her at a birth, and pardon grant for atonement made!"

And Tornasouk made answer: "This woman thou bringest for my concubine. Will she work for me?"

And Yamko answered: "Even as fourteen women!"

And Tornasouk spoke again: "Yes, but will she love me?"

And Yamko answered: "Ay, as much as fourteen women!"

And Tornasouk rolled over in bed deep down below, and sent up a cloud of smoke and a pillar of flame and a shower of red-hot stones, and said—

"Ay, but if I take another wife, will she be jealous?"

And Yamko replied: "Of a verity will she, O Ancient One. Jealous as fourteen women!"

And Tornasouk grunted, and said: "Get thee away, and take her with thee! A woman who is as jealous as one woman is jealous enough for me!"

And Yamko with his wife and his babes went happily to his own house.

THE TOOTH OF TULOO

The mother of Kolosha, the young *choupan*, said to him when he arose from slumber—

"O thou of the flat nose and shock head, who from thy birth wert consecrated to the priesthood, being buttered with clay and rancid oil, left outside the Kacjimé when it froze hard enough within doors to split a stone, plunged into icy water if thou didst but squall, and whipped with whips of walrus-hide to teach thee endurance! Behold, it is borne in upon me that the time of thy probation is over, and I shall see thee a consecrated high priest, a full-fledged Angakok of the Angakout before I die. To thee will the fairest maidens of our tribe be confided, that thou mayest perfect them in dancing, in beauteous deportment, and the arts of love. Thou wilt boil philtres and cast spells, and make amulets, and smell out witches, and lure the spoil of sea and land to the fish-hook and spear, when the hearts of our hunting men are heavy, and there is no blubber in the land."

Then he who was to become a sorcerer said to his mother—

"By my father's boots (upon which my food was spread when I was a child) thou speakest soothly. For last night, as I wandered over the chill white plains, watching the stars roll through the drifting vapours, and listening to the howling of the wind, the moon looked out from behind a crag that rose up into the black Infinity, and darted a certain ray into my eyeballs. And the hair of my head bristled, and the skin of my flesh crept, for between the crashing of

the icebergs and the bellowing of the waves, it seemed that I heard the voice of the Goddess Sidnè—she who lives beneath the sea. And the Ocean Mother cried to me from her throne between the pillars which support the earth—

"'Kolosha!'

"And I answered, 'Here!'

"And she said, 'Hearken and obey! When next the lamplight flickers on thy waking eyelids, rise up and get thee to the uninhabited Island of the Four Winds, where Tuloo, the dead magician, has slept for nine hundred winters. And there shalt thou receive the revelations and transplant the Wondrous Tooth, and be of the Angakout for evermore. But look to it thou anger not the dead one by any omission of courteous ceremonies, lest thy life pay forfeit for the fault; and thy soul be condemned to wander the chilly wastes of Heaven, with the damned, instead of descending to the snug Paradise that lies deep underground, there to play leapfrog between the pillars, and kiss the comely maidens, and suck blubber with the Blessed for evermore.'"

Thus spake Kolosha, recounting the communication of the Divine One, and his mother, that virtuous woman who had from the first hour of wedlock remained faithful to her husband and his male relations, even to the pitch of carefully cultivating stupidity, ugliness, and uncleanliness, that desires unlawful might be turned away; wept and embraced her son, and fed him with melted grease and seal's entrails, that he might be strong to endure trials; and warmed his feet in her bosom ere he went forth from the hut.

And he took his paddle and went to the beach and launched a little boat of sealskins, and invoked Jug Jak, the father of All Whales, for safety on the voyage; and sped over the black water to the Island of the Four Winds. And he drew up the *kaiak* on the ice-floe and hid the paddle;

and went over the sharp rocks to the cave where for nine hundred winters Tuloo the Old had slept; and legions of spirits battled in the sky overhead so that the glancing of their spears dazzled the eyeballs of Kolosha, and the clouds were dyed with their crimson blood.

And coming to the entrance of the cave, he struck fire from flint and lighted a wisp of moss, and stuck it in a shellful of oil and entered. And behold! the Ancient sat there, dry and mummified, wearing a mask, and clad in his sorcerer's robes. The wings of a screech-owl were outspread above his hood of sable marten fur, and his outer garment of white dressed deer-skin was fringed with ivory marmosets, foxes and penguins; and his gloves were of otter-fur, while his boots were bordered with bells, little and big, and he wore a breastplate of chains and rings, eagles' claws and fishes' scales, and a girdle of walrus teeth. And he held the Holy Drum betwixt the stiff knees of him; and upon it the Cross of the Four Winds and the Eye of Sidnè the All-seeing were delineated, and magical clay figures of men and women and animals were hidden inside. And Kolosha, broadening his heart with a deep breath (for the Dead was terrible to look upon) cried—

"Hail! Hear! Respond!" and struck upon the magic Drum so that the puppets inside rattled and squeaked.

And at the noise the owl's feathers fluttered, and the mask shook, and the corpse started—but Kolosha was not afraid.

And he struck upon the Drum a second time. And the wind roared, and the rocks rumbled, and the serried lights in the northern sky leapt up and went out. But the little oil lamp glimmered bravely and Kolosha did not tremble.

And he struck upon the Drum a third time, and the roof of the cavern split, and the sky became a sheet of fire, and the sea heaved and was troubled, and rose up like a wall all

round the island, and crested over a black wave-curl edged with foam, as if about to overwhelm it. But Kolosha knew no fear.

And he cried, "With Permission!" and put forth his hand and removed the headdress and undid the mask of the corpse and laid it aside, and looked in the face of the black grinning mummy and met with his living eyes the rayless stare of death.

And he saluted Tuloo with a formal salutation, rubbing noses with him, and patting him upon the stomach; and he spat in his palms and anointed his countenance with saliva—a compliment which is only paid to the most honourable persons—and made an offering of three pipefuls of tobacco, and the raw liver of a bear, which sickens men that eat of it and slays dogs outright. And at sight of these delicacies Tuloo smiled with lips that were like yellow parchment, and nodded so that the little sticks fixed in the top of his skull rattled together.

Then the heart of Kolosha was lifted up, for he perceived that his offerings were graciously accepted, and he made obeisance thrice and lowlily, and cried, "Inculcate! I await!" and squatted at the feet of the mummy. And he sought wisdom of Tuloo, asking, "Where liveth Perfection?"

And Tuloo spake not, but the answer was written upon his forehead in luminous letters that shone and shifted and vanished as Kolosha looked upon them.

"Nowhere upon Earth. For never yet was man nor woman born that sinned not. The best of the Human Kind are bad in spots. Remember this and trust not fully."

And Kolosha spake again, asking, "Where exists Absolute Evil?"

And the answer lightened out again upon the forehead-bone of Tuloo—

"Nowhere upon Earth. For never yet lived man nor

woman that was entirely wicked. The worst of the Human Kind are good in patches. Remember this and doubt not wholly."

And Kolosha said, " Frost and fire, weeping and laughter, pleasure and pain, poison and nourishment, health and disease. What is this ? "

And Tuloo answered, " This is Love; for it freezes and warms, rejoices and grieves, it kills and cherishes, raises up and casts down. Hast thou no harder question, Kolosha ? "

And Kolosha said, " An empty pot and a full pot, a lamp that smokes and one that burns clear, a rotten blanket and one that is sound, a leaky canoe and a taut boat. What signifies this ? "

And the dead man returned, " This is Life. To one man sweet, to another bitter, according to the measure he receives. Tax me with something tougher, Kolosha ! "

And Kolosha lifted his head and cried, " The End and the Beginning, the day-set and the dawn, the Defeat and the Victory. The Certainty that was Doubt and the Doubt which is Certainty. The Sleep which is Waking and the Waking that is Sleep. O, Tuloo ! tell me what is this ? "

And Tuloo answered, " This is Death. And weary me with no more questions, for I would slumber with the dead again. Take the tooth thou camest for, and with it wisdom, and begone."

And he opened his mouth and yawned, and Kolosha saw the tooth sticking whole and sound in the rotting jaw, and put forth an eager hand to take it.

But in his haste and greed he forgot to say " With Permission," and the dead sorcerer was angered at his lack of manners and snapped his jaws together, catching the finger of Kolosha, so that it was bitten to the bone. And Kolosha bore the pain without flinching, for he had

been schooled to endure; and politely begged the corpse's leave to depart.

But Tuloo said in the writing that was written upon his forehead-bone, "For nine hundred winters have I sat me here, and many sons of men have come to me to receive enlightenment and to borrow a tooth, but none strove to grab the treasure from my mouth without asking permission. Art a rude fellow, and I will not set thee free! The long nights and the long days shall come and go, and moons shall wax and moons shall wane, and suns shall wake from wintry sleep and glad the waiting world with warm and greenness. But here thou shalt tarry, Kolosha, and live till thou diest, and shrivel when thou art dead to a mummy like me!"

And hearing this Kolosha whipped out a sharp little knife of bone and would have cut off his finger. But the heart of Tuloo softened and he bade him hold, saying—

"One chance thou shalt have for thy finger. In life, O Kolosha, are many good things; but the best thing of all to the Inoit is laughter. And while I lived I laughed much. At the fat that spluttered in the cooking pot, when the lamp-flame licked it; at the end of my nose when it froze and fell off; at the narwhal that was driven ashore by the gale, when we ate our way into his belly and came out all crimson on the other side; at the famine that came and starved us to skin and bone, so that a man rattled in his garments like a dried berry in a bladder. Little else asked I but laughter, and now I am dead and laugh no more. Tell me three merry tales, and if thou canst make me laugh, even with one of them, I will free thy finger. I swear it by Sidnè, the mother of the Father of Whales, and Tornasouk of the Holy Drum! But if I cackle not, nor chuckle, nor so much as grin, by the third essay—then here thou shalt stay with me, Kolosha, while life endures, or win home without thy finger, and the Wisdom thou didst seek!"

And Kolosha pondered a space and said, "Hear the story of the Frugal Wife!

"A man returned from the chase without spoil of fish or fowl. And when he saw his wife trudging through the mud in her big boots—'*Sook—sook*'—to meet him, between hunger and disappointment his gall overflowed, and he harpooned her violently, crying, 'By Sidnè! it shall not be said that I have hit nothing to-day!' But the sharp weapon, failing to pierce the thickness of the woman's clothing, rebounded from her outer garment, which was made of a bear's skin, leaving but a rent, and she, turning round without a word, went upon her way; and the man, being ashamed of his violence, did no more. But on the morrow he went forth again and caught much fish; and when he paddled home his wife came out to meet him, as it is the duty of a wife to do. But while yet afar she paused, and cried, 'Fortune or none?' And the man, meaning to be merry with her, answered, 'Meaner sport than yesterday!' Upon which she cried again, saying, 'O thou honourable and greasy one! Suffer that I return home and put on the garment in which thou didst harpoon me yesterday, so that this, which is new and without a rent, may not be spoiled!' Thus she spake in her frugality and the tale has been told for an example since."

So he ended, and Tuloo did not laugh, but only bit the finger more sharply and said: "Vanity rather than frugality, and a poor tale, moreover; one without the shake of a rib in it. Tell thou a better if thou wouldst wend free."

And Kolosha said (having reflected awhile): "Hear the story of the Greedy Man!

"An envious and greedy man passed by the hut of a generous and unselfish one, and such a savoury odour smelled he that he crawled down the passage and thrust his head between the bear-skins. And the sight he saw made his mouth water. For the host was sitting to

banquet with his family and friends, and before them were spread pieces of whale's flesh rolled in blubber, putrid dried fish, and mince of raw seal's liver, sprinkled with live maggots——"

Here Kolosha broke off the tale, for Tuloo gibbered with wrath and nipped the finger bitterly and said, "Enough. Is it not sufficiently bad to know that I am dead and shall never eat earthly food again, without being taunted with talk of all these savoury viands? Skip the banquet and go on."

Said Kolosha, with the tears standing in his eyes, from the pain of his finger—

"Only two more dishes were there, O Majestical Mummied One!—reindeer's marrow, and bilberries mashed with grease and snow. And to wash these down, great goblets of rancid oil of a very superior brand. *Ou-ie!*"

This because Tuloo had bitten the finger again.

"And so the host called to the greedy man to enter and sit at his right hand. And the greedy one did so gladly, but observing the host thrust his hand into the best dish and draw out the most delicate morsel, '*That he means to eat himself*,' he thought, and in his spite, secretly rubbed the tit-bit with a piece of human fat he carried about him, taken from a grave he had violated in order to procure this powerful charm. But to his surprise and shame, the envied mouthful was thrust between his own lips, and in confusion he swallowed it, not daring to refuse. But no sooner had it passed his gullet than a raging hunger seized him, and he fell upon the dishes and cleared them one after the other and drank up the oil, goblets and all; and would have eaten the guests, by virtue of the evil spell, had they not fled in terror. Upon which he himself ran home, and, meeting his young children by the way, devoured them; and then fell upon his wife and made short work of her; and then ate his dogs and his skins, his great hide boots

and his very sledges. Finally, when nothing else was left to devour, he gobbled up his mother-in-law and died of an indigestion. He, he, he ! "

It was Kolosha who chuckled and not the corpse. In truth a ripple such as one sees upon the surface of dark waters over which a wandering breeze passes, stirred the face of the Ancient, but he made no other sign, save in squeezing more closely the finger of Kolosha between his jagged jaws, so that the youth's grin was speedily changed to a grimace of anguish.

And Tuloo said, " Of thy chances two are gone, O miserable one ! If I laugh not the next time thou art a doomed man ! "

Upon which Kolosha, hiding his dread with a show of indifference, cast about in his memory for a side-splitting story, but behold ! the mirth had gone out of all those he remembered, so that they seemed as mouldy and as stale as the six months' dead papoose that is carried at the back of the mourning mother in its cradle of birch-bark and moss.

And he gulped and faltered and said, " Hear the tale and read the riddle of the Polite Penguin, that was told to the child Chulik by the fool Falesha !

" A penguin waddling home to the seashore, in haste to lay an egg, met with a blue fox on his way back from the fishing; and immediately, despite the pressing nature of her business, turned back with the animal. But whereas she had set out shorewards on two legs, she returned inland on four ! O, Tuloo ! canst thou read the riddle ? "

And Tuloo pondered a while, and at last he said, " What have I to do with a fool's riddle ? Guess the answer for thyself, and I will tell thee whether thou art right or wrong. How should the bird that went forth on two legs return upon four ? "

And Kolosha spake and answered, " Because, O Venerable Dried Up One ! the penguin travelled inside the fox ! "

And Tuloo was taken unawares and his jaws fell apart, releasing the finger of Kolosha from durance sore; and he laughed a whistling laugh, and shook until his ribs rattled in his skin. And Kolosha snatched from the wide open mouth of the mummy the august tooth and clapped it into his own, and hid it under his tongue, and became upon the instant an Angakok by virtue of its power.

And Tuloo said, "Get thee hence with thy dear-bought wisdom, Kolosha! Yet ere thou goest tell me the first truth the tooth hath taught thee."

And Kolosha made answer, "It is that the wisdom of the wisest may be baffled by the folly of a fool. For thou who knowest the secrets of the stars and the language of the winds, and canst pierce into the Past and foretell the Future, couldst not read the riddle of Falesha."

And he quitted the cave and went back to the shore, and found the sea quiet, and his boat as he had left it. And he departed from the Island of the Four Winds and returned to the country of the Inoit.

THE GREAT BEAST OF KAFUE

It happened at our homestead on the border of South-eastern Rhodesia, seventy miles from Tuli Concession, some three years after the War.

A September storm raged, the green, broad-leaved tobacco-plants tossed like the waves of the ocean I had crossed and re-crossed, journeying to and coming back from my dead mother's wet, sad country of Ireland to this land of my father and his father's father.

The acacias and kameel thorns and the huge cactus-like euphorbia that fringed the water-courses and the irrigation channels had wrung their hands all day without ceasing, like Makalaka women at a native funeral. Night closed in: the wooden shutters were barred, the small-paned windows fastened, yet they shook and rattled as though human beings without were trying to force a way in. White-wash fell in scales from the big tie-beams and cross-rafters of the farm kitchen, and lay in little powdery drifts of whiteness on the solid table of brown locust-tree wood, and my father's Dutch Bible that lay open there. Upon my father's great black head that was bent over the Book, were many streaks and patches of white that might not be shaken or brushed away.

It had fallen at the beginning of the War, that snow of sorrow streaking the heavy curling locks of coarse black hair. My pretty young mother—an Irishwoman of the North, had been killed in the Women's Laager at Guelders-dorp during the Siege. My father served as Staats gunner

during the Investment—and now you know the dreadful doubt that heaped upon those mighty shoulders a bending load, and sprinkled the black hair with white.

You are to see me in my blue drill roundabout and little homespun breeches sitting on a cricket in the shadow of the table-ledge, over against the grim *sterk* figure in the big, thong-seated armchair.

There would be no going to bed that night. The dam was over-full already, and the next spate from the hill sluits might crack the great wall of mud-cemented saw-squared boulders, or overflow it, and lick away the work of years. The farm-house roof had been rebuilt since the shell from the English naval gun had wrecked it, but the work of men to-day is not like that of the men of old. My father shook his head, contemplating the new masonry, and the whitewash fell as though in confirmation of his expressed doubts.

I had begged to stay up rather than lie alone in the big bed in my father's room. Nodding with sleepiness I should have denied, I carved with my two-bladed American knife at a little canoe I meant to swim in the shallower river-pools. And as I shaped the prow I dreamed of something I had heard on the previous night.

A traveller of the better middle-class, overseer of a coal-mine working " up Buluwayo " way, who had stayed with us the previous night and gone on to Tuli that morning, had told the story. What he had failed to tell I had haltingly spelled out of the three-weeks-old English newspaper he had left behind.

So I wrought, and remembered, and my little canoe swelled and grew in my hands. I was carrying it on my back through a forest of tall reeds and high grasses, forcing a painful way between the tough wrist-thick stems, with the salt sweat running down into my eyes. . . . Then I was in the canoe, wielding the single paddle, working my

frail crank craft through sluggish pools of black water, overgrown with broad spiny leaves of water-plants cradling flowers of marvellous hue. In the canoe bows leaned my grandfather's elephant-gun, the inlaid, browned-steel-barrelled weapon with the diamond-patterned stock and breech, that had always seemed to my childish eyes the most utterly desirable, absolutely magnificent possession a grown-up man might call his own.

A *paauw* made a great commotion getting up amongst the reeds; but does a hunter go after *paauw* with his grandfather's elephant-gun? Duck were feeding in the open spaces of sluggish black water. I heard what seemed to be the plop! of a jumping fish, on the other side of a twenty-foot high barrier of reeds and grasses. I looked up then, and saw, glaring down upon me from inconceivable heights of sheer horror, the Thing of which I had heard and read.

* * * * * *

At this juncture I dropped the little canoe and clutched my father round the leg.

"What is it, *mijn jongen?*"

He, too, seemed to rouse out of a waking dream. You are to see the wide, burnt-out-looking grey eyes that were staring sorrowfully out of their shadowy caves under the shaggy eyebrows, lighten out of their deep abstraction and drop to the level of my childish face.

* * * * * *

"You were thinking of the great beast of Kafue Valley, and you want to ask me if I will lend you my father's elephant-rifle when you are big enough to carry it that you may go and hunt for the beast and kill it; is that so?"

My father grasped his great black beard in one huge knotted brown hand, and made a rope of it, as was his way. He looked from my chubby face to the old-fashioned black-powder 8-bore that hung upon the wall against a

leopard kaross, and back again, and something like a smile curved the grim mouth under the shaggy black and white moustache.

" The gun you shall have, boy, when you are of age to use it, or a 450-Mannlicher or a 600-Mauser, the best that may be bought north of the Transvaal, to shoot explosive or conical bullets from cordite cartridges. But not unless you give me your promise never to kill that beast, shall money of mine go to the buying of such a gun for you. Come now, let me have your word ! "

Even to my childish vanity the notion of my solemnly entering into a compact binding my hand against the slaying of the semi-fabulous beast-marvel of the Upper Rhodesian swamps, smacked of the fantastic if not of the absurd. But my father's eyes had no twinkle in them, and I faltered out the promise they commanded.

" *Nooit—nooit* will I kill that beast ! It should kill me, rather ! "

" Your mother's son will not be *valsch* to a vow. For so would you, son of my body, make of me, your father, a traitor to an oath that I have sworn ! "

The great voice boomed in the rafters of the farm kitchen, vying with the baffled roaring of the wind that was trying to get in, as I had told myself, and lie down, folding wide quivering wings and panting still, upon the sheepskin that was spread before the hearth.

" But—but why did you swear ? "

I faltered out the question, staring at the great bearded figure in homespun jacket and tan-cord breeches and *veldschoens*, and thought again that it had the hairy skin of Esau and the haunted face of Saul.

Said my father, grimly—

" Had I questioned my father so at twice your age, he would have skinned my back and I should have deserved it. But I cannot beat your mother's son, though the Lord

punish me for my weakness. . . . And you have the spirit of the *jager* in you, even as I. What I saw you may one day see. What I might have killed, that shall you spare, because of me and my oath. Why did I take it upon me, do you ask? Even though I told you, how should a child understand? What is it you are saying? Did I really, really see the beast? Ay, by the Lord!" said my father thoughtfully, "I saw him. And never can a man who has seen, forget that sight. What are you saying?"

The words tumbled over one another as I stammered in my hurry—

"But—but the English traveller said only one white man besides the Mashona hunter has seen the beast, and the newspaper says so too."

"*Natuurlijk*. And the white man is me," thundered the deep voice.

I hesitated.

"But since the planting of the tobacco you have not left the *plaats*. And the newspaper is of only three weeks back."

"*Dat spreekt*, but the story is older than that, *mijn jongen*. It is the third time it has been dished up in the *Buluwayo Courant* sauced up with lies to change the taste as belly-lovers have their meat. But I am the man who saw the beast of Kafue, and the story that is told is my story, nevertheless!"

I felt my cheeks beginning to burn. Wonderful as were the things I knew to be true of the man, my father, this promised to be the most wonderful of all.

"It was when I was hunting in the Zambezi Country," said my father, "three months after the *Commandaants* of the Forces of the United Republics met at Klerksdorp to arrange conditions of peace——"

"With the English Generals," I put in.

"With the English, as I have said. You had been sent

to your—to *her* people in Ireland. I had not then thought of rebuilding the farm. For more than a house of stones had been thrown down for me, and more than so many thousand acres of land laid waste . . .

"Where did I go? *Ik wiet niet.* I wandered *op en neer* like the evil spirit in the Scriptures," the great corded hand shut the Book and reached over and snuffed the tallow-dip that hung over at the top, smoking and smelling, and pitched the black wick-end angrily on the red hearth-embers. "I sought rest and found none, either for the sole of my foot or the soul in my body. There is bitterness in my mouth as though I have eaten the spotted lily-root of the swamps. I cannot taste the food I swallow, and when I lie down at night something lies down with me, and when I rise up, it rises too and goes by my side all day."

I clung to the leg of the table, not daring to clutch my father's. For his eyes did not seem to see me any more, and a blob of foam quivered on his beard that hung over his great breast in a shadowy cascade dappled with patches of white. He went on, I scarcely daring to breathe—

"For, after all, do I know it is not I who killed her? That accursed day, was I not on duty as ever since the beginning of the investment, and is it not a splinter from a Maxim Nordenfeld fired from an eastern gun-position, that——" Great drops stood on my father's forehead. His huge frame shook. The clenched hand resting on the solid table of locust-beam, shook that also, shaking me, clinging to the table-leg with my heart thumping violently, and a cold, crawling sensation among the roots of my curls.

"At first, I seem to remember there was a man hunting with me. He had many Kaffir servants and four Mashona hunters and wagons drawn by salted tailless spans, fine guns and costly tents, plenty of stores and medicine in little sugar-pills, in bottles with silver tops. But he sickened in spite of all his quinine, and the salted oxen

died, just like beasts with tails; and besides, he was afraid of the Makwakwa and the Mashengwa with their slender poisoned spears of reeds. He turned back at last. I pushed on."

There was a pause. The strange, iron-grey, burnt-out eyes looked through me and beyond me, then the deep, trembling voice repeated, once more changing the past into the present tense—

"I push on west. My life is of value to none. The boy —is he not with her people? Shall I live to have him back under my roof and see in his face one day the knowledge that I have killed his mother? Nay, nay, I will push on!"

There was so long a silence after this that I ventured to move. Then my father looked at me, and spoke to me, not as though I were a child, but as if I had been another man.

"I pushed on, crossing the rivers on a blown-up goatskin and some calabashes, keeping my father's elephant-gun and my cartridges dry by holding them above my head. Food! For food there were thorny orange cucumbers with green pulp, and the native women at the kraals gave me cakes of maize and milk. I hunted and killed rhino and elephant and hippo and lion until the head-men of the Mashengwa said the beast was a god of theirs and the slaying of it would bring a pestilence upon their tribe, and so I killed no more. And one day I shot a cow hippo with her calf, and she stood to suckle the ugly little thing while her life was bleeding out of her, and after that I ceased to kill. I needed little, and there were yet the green-fleshed cucumbers, and ground-nuts, and things like those."

He made a rope of his great beard, twisting it with a rasping sound.

"Thus I reached the Upper Kafue Valley where the great grass swamps are. No railway then, running like

an iron snake up from Buluwayo to bring the ore down from the silver-mines that are there.

"Six days' *trek* from the mines—I went on foot always, you will understand!—six days' journey from the mines, above where L'uengwe River is wedded to Kafue, as the Badanga say—is a big water.

"It is a lake, or rather, two lakes, not round, but shaped like the bowls of two wooden spoons. A shore of black, stone-like baked mud round them, and a bridge of the same stone is between them, so that they make the figure that is for 8."

The big, hairy forefinger of my father's right hand traced the numeral in the powdered whitewash that lay in drifts upon the table.

"That is the shape of the lakes, and the Badanga say that they have no bottom, and that fish taken from their waters remain raw and alive, even on the red-hot embers of their cooking stove. They are a lazy, dirty people who live on snakes and frogs and grubs—tortoise and fish. And they gave me to eat and told me, partly in words of my own moder Taal they had picked up somehow, partly in sign language, about the Great Beast that lives in the double lake that is haunted by the spirits of their dead."

I waited, my heart pumping at the bottom of my throat, my blood running horribly, delightfully chill, to hear the rest.

"The hunting spirit revives in a man, even at death's door, to hear of an animal the like of which no living hunter has ever brought down. The Badanga tell me of this one, tales, tales, tales! They draw it for me with a pointed stick on a broad green leaf, or in the ashes of their cooking-fires. And I have seen many a great beast, but, *voor den donder!* never a beast such as that!"

I held on to my stool with both hands.

"I ask the Badanga to guide me to the lair of the beast

for all the money I have upon me. They care not for gold, but for the old silver hunting-watch I carry they will risk offending the spirits of their dead. The old man who has drawn the creature for me, he will take me. And it is January, the time of year in which he has been before known to rise and bellow—*Maar!*—bellow like twenty buffalo bulls in spring-time, for his mate to rise from those bottomless deeps below and drink the air and sun."

So there are two great beasts! Neither the traveller nor the newspaper nor my father, until this moment, had hinted at that!

"The she-beast is much the smaller and has no horns. This my old man makes clear to me, drawing her with the point of his fish-spear on smooth mud. She is very sick the last time my old man has seen her. Her great moon-eyes are dim, and the stinking spume dribbles from her jaws. She can only float in the trough of the wave that her mate makes with his wallowings, her long scaly neck lying like a dead python on the oily black water. My old man thinks she was then near death. I ask him how long ago that is? Twenty times have the blue lake-lilies blossomed, the lilies with the sweet seeds that the Badanga make bread of—since. And the great bull has twice been heard bellowing, but never has he been seen of man since then."

My father folded his great arms upon the black-and-white cascade of beard that swept down over his shirt of homespun and went on—

"Twenty years. Perhaps, think I, my old man has lied to me! But we are at the end of the last day's journey. The sun has set and night has come. My old man makes me signs we are near the lakes and I climb a high mahogo, holding by the limbs of the wild fig that is hugging the tree to death."

My father spat into the heart of the glowing wood ashes, and said—

"I see the twin lakes lying in the midst of the high grass-swamps, barely a mile away. The black, shining waters cradle the new moon of January in their bosom, and the blue star that hangs beneath her horn, and there is no ripple on the surface, or sign of a beast, big or little. And I despise myself, I, the son of honest Booren, who have been duped by the lies of a black man-ape. I am coming down the tree, when through the night comes a long, hollow, booming, bellowing roar that is not the cry of any beast I know. Thrice it comes, and my old man of the Badanga, squatting among the roots of the mahogo, nods his wrinkled bald skull, and says, squinting up at me, 'Now you have heard, Baas, will you go back or go on?'

"I answer, '*Al recht uit!*'

"For something of the hunting spirit has wakened in me. And I see to the cleaning of the elephant-gun and load it carefully before I sleep that night."

I would have liked to ask a question but the words stuck in my throat.

"By dawn of day we have reached the lakes," went on my father. "The high grass and the tall reeds march out into the black water as far as they may, then the black stone beach shelves off into depths unknown.

"He who has written up the story for the Buluwayo newspaper says that the lake was once a volcano and that the crumbly black stone is lava. It may be so. But volcanoes are holes in the tops of mountains, while the lakes lie in a valley-bottom, and he who wrote cannot have been there, or he would know there are two, and not one.

"All the next night we, camping on the belt of stony shore that divides lake from lake, heard nothing. We ate the parched grain and baked grubs that my old man carried in a little bag. We lighted no fire because of the

spirits of the dead Badanga that would come crowding about it to warm themselves, and poison us with their breath. My old man said so, and I humoured him. My dead needed no fire to bring her to me. She was there always . . .

" All the day and the night through we heard and saw nothing. But at windstill dawn of the next day I saw a great curving ripple cross the upper lake that may be a mile and a half wide; and the reeds upon the nearer shore were wetted to the knees as by the wave that is left in the wake of a steamer, and oily patches of scum, each as big as a barn floor, befouled the calm water, and there was a cold, strange smell upon the breeze, but nothing more.

" Until at sunset of the next day, when I stood upon the mid-most belt of shore between lake and lake, with my back to the blood-red wonder of the west and my eyes sheltered by my hand as I looked out to where I had seen the waters divided as a man furrows earth with the plough-share, and felt a shadow fall over me from behind, and turned . . . and saw . . . *Alamachtig !* "

I could not breathe. At last, at last, it was coming !

" I am no coward," said my father, in his deep resounding bass, " but that was a sight of terror. My old man of the Badanga had bolted like a rock-rabbit. I could hear the dry reeds crashing as he broke through. And the horned head of the beast, that was as big as a wagon-trunk shaking about on the top of a python-neck that topped the tallest of the teak-trees or mahogos that grow in the grass-swamps, seemed as if it were looking for the little human creature that was trying to run away.

" *Voor den donder !* how the water rises up in columns of smoke-spray as the great beast lashes it with his crocodile-tail ! His head is crocodile also, with horns of rhino, his body has the bulk of six hippo bulls together. He is covered with armour of scales, yellow-white as the scales of leprosy, he has paddles like a tortoise. God of my

fathers, what a beast to see ! I forget the gun I hold against my hip—I can only stand and look, while the cold, thick puffs of stinking musk are brought to my nostrils and my ear-drums are well-nigh split with the bellowing of the beast. Ay ! and the wave of his wallowings that wets one to the neck is foul with clammy ooze and oily scum.

" Why did the thing not see me ? I did not try to hide from those scaly-lidded great eyes, yellow with half-moon-shaped pupils, I stood like an idol of stone. Perhaps that saved me, or I was too little a thing to vent a wrath so great upon. He Who in the beginning made herds of beasts like that to move upon the face of the waters, and let this one live to show the pigmy world of to-day what creatures were of old, knows. I do not. I was dazed with the noise of its roarings and the thundering blows of its huge tail upon the water; I was drenched with the spume of its snortings and sickened with the stench it gave forth. But I never took my eyes from it, as it spent its fury, and little by little I came to understand.

" *Het is jammer* to see anything suffer as that beast was suffering. Another man in my place would have thought as much, and when it lay still at last on the frothing black water, a bullet from the elephant-rifle would have lodged in the little stupid brain behind the great moon-eye, and there would have been an end . . .

" But I did not shoot ! "

* * * * * *

It seemed an age before my father spoke again, though the cuckoo-clock had only ticked eight times.

" No ! I would not shoot and spare the beast, dinosaurus or brontosaurus, or whatever the wiseacres who have not seen him may name him, the anguish that none had spared me. *' Let him go on ! '* said I. *' Let him go on seeking her in the abysses that no lead-line may ever fathom, without consolation, without hope ! Let him rise to the sun and*

the breeze of spring through miles of the cold black water, and find her not, year after year until the ending of the world. Let him call her through the mateless nights until Day and Night rush together at the sound of the Trumpet of the Judgment, and Time shall be no more!' "

Crash!

The great hand came down upon the solid locust-wood table, breaking the spell that had bound my tongue.

"I—do not understand," I heard my own child-voice saying. "Why was the Great Beast so sorry? What was he looking for?"

"His mate who died. Ay, at the lower end of the second lake, where the water shallows, her bones were sticking up like the bleached timbers of a wrecked ship. And He and She being the last of their kind upon the earth, therefore he knows desolation . . . and shall know it till death brings forgetfulness and rest. Boy, the wind is fallen, the rain has spent itself, it is time that you go to bed."

THE JUDGMENT OF BIG MAN

Among the nomads of the Siberian tundras, where beneath the snow and ice of the long winter are still smouldering the forest fires of the short, fierce summer, among the Etayans, hyperborean hunters of Ultima Thule, the Inoit of the Aleutian Archipelago, and their cousins of Alaska, the respect shown to chief personages is so scrupulously enforced that the civilised stranger, omitting it or the appearance of it—is apt to get into trouble, unless he be supported by other Europeans, with comparatively unwearied dogs, plenty of dried salmon, flour and tobacco, and the almost worshipped marvel of the Winchester repeating rifle. It is best to be on the safe side and pay at least a tentative homage to authority. The language of your primitives may be unknown to you, but the title of the savage in power is always the same. Find out the two words in the language signifying "big" and "man" and join them together. Etiquette is satisfied, for "Big Man" is the primitive title of the chief. When your own forerunners gnawed charred bones in their cave-dwellings, the hairy giant who was strong enough to take and keep and hold and enforce the respect of his inferiors by the use of the stone axe or knotted club was called Big Man.

In May, a party of Russian hunters and traders crossed Behring Strait and struck out for the Yukon. They were frost-scarred and weatherbeaten Yakuts and for the most part elderly. But one of them, Ivashka, who had learned broken English and broken Inoit amongst the trading

people of Behring, was young, and of a ruddy countenance especially pleasing to the eye of a woman of the Inoit, accustomed to the greasy, bluish-copper brown of her own and her people's skins. Thus when they struck the trail leading to the summer village of the Inoit, and saw the smoke of the cooking-lamps rising from the roofs of the log cabins, loosely chinked with Arctic moss, and the tired dog-teams broke into a gallop, and the Siwash huskies charged howling down upon the strangers, ready to fight or make friends, eat or be eaten as the case might be—and the Angakoks and elders of the tribe came out of the bigger dwelling that served as the Kajimé, and the grunting preliminaries were got over, and the ingratiatory gifts were made, and the women, hitherto shyly keeping aloof, gathered round as the trading began, Ivashka, the fringes of his wolf-skin hood blowing back from his red cheeks, created a sensation and made an impression, too great an impression for the peace of Ounaka.

There was a salmon-feast in the Kajimé. Three half-broiled fourteen-pounders were enough for the ten voracious Russians, but the Inoit men were not so mincing. Each brave accounted for a whole fish. Reindeer's stomach with the half-digested vegetable contents and bilberries with back-fat formed a course of sweets. And after the feast came a debauch of tobacco, and vodka, the precious alcohol for which the savage sells his goods, his wives, his children, himself.

Ivashka slipped away from the debauch and strolled out amongst the huts. The river fed with melting snows roared on its way to the huge bosom of the Yukon. Grasses and brushwood were beginning to shoot. The rushing waters abounded with new-run trout and salmon, there were green tips to the firs and green tassels on the larches, the plover wailed above its little grey-green chick, squatting in the mosses, the wild geese and duck were noisily

feeding in the marshy places. In a little pine-wood Ivashka met a young woman. It was Ounaka. She wore a parki of otter-skin trimmed with beech-martin and her top-knot was tied with green ribbon—a sign that Ivashka understood. But he did not understand that he should have formally asked Big Man for the privilege of looking into the brown, seal-like eyes above which the green top-knot waggled so attractively. A word to Big Man would have gained him that which he took, but he did not speak it. There is a proverb among the Inoits that crows carry tales. Perhaps a crow flew over the little pine-wood and then lighted on the roof of the Kajimé. Who can tell?

"You God's fool, Ivashka, you have got us into trouble," said Yegorof, the oldest of the hunters, when Ivashka and his sweetheart were brought back to the summer lodge. But tobacco and brick-tea and a bottle of vodka healed the breach, and in a couple of days the sleds were loaded with the pelts and fish and game the traders had bought, and they struck again into the Yukon trail.

Ivashka looked out of the tail of his eye for Ounaka, but she was not to be seen. When the line of sleds, with their owners, had snaked out of sight, Big Man said simply—

"Bring Ounaka."

Ounaka was brought with a badly scratched face, by some women, out of a hut close by. She crept up to the place where Big Man stood waiting, crouched down, and waited for judgment. It came—

"Get you ready to die, Ounaka!" said Big Man, and turned away.

Ounaka squatted there in the watery May sunshine until the women took her away. They dressed her in all her finery, glass beads and a necklace of birds' feathers, fish-skin shoes with ankle-ties woven of marsh grass, they put an ivory spatula in her lower lip and painted her face with

ochre and charcoal. A great yell rose up outside the cabin, yet not one of the women looked out to see what the noise was about. But when the adorning of Ounaka was finished, and they brought her out, they found that a great bull moose, a patriarch of the forest, had been run down by the dogs and held until twenty of the most daring of the braves had bound him with walrus-hide thongs and dragged him back to the summer camp, alive.

Such a thing had never been known to happen before. The general opinion was that the Great Moose was not a real moose, but a spirit. The Angakok and Big Man held a consultation, and then Big Man lifted his hand, and there was a great silence.

"Take Ounaka and bind her upon the horns of the great bull moose," said Big Man, "and cut his bonds and let the divine beast go free. Thus shall Ounaka be a sacrifice, for this is demanded of the gods, as it is very plain to see!"

Thus, a classic vengeance and a savage expiation were offered as one. Big Man had never heard of the things that were done of old in the Rome of Nero. He ordered, and the thing was done. Ounaka was laid crosswise upon the huge flattened antlers and bound. Then the thongs were cut, and the great bull moose knew, as they fell, that he was free. He spurned the ground with his splay hoofs and snorted, conscious of the strange burden weighing upon his mighty neck. Then—the creature was gone back to freedom. Nothing was said. The Angakok rattled something in his medicine-drum and Big Man lighted a fresh pipe. Then the elders and the young men went back to the Kajimé and the women waddled off to catch salmon.

I had set out for the Klondyke from Vancouver with a small party of men who were out for adventure and bear and moose, as well as for gold. A flat-bottomed, stern-wheeled steamer took us from Fort St. Michael some 1800 miles up the Yukon to Forty-Mile Creek.

From that point a journey by land of some eighty miles remains—to the mouth of the Klondyke; we calculated to do that much on foot, travelling light and camping where game was plentiful.

There were three of us: Wickham, once a barrister of the Temple, London; Perry, a long, lean, taciturn American, an old ex-employé of the Hudson's Bay Company, who acted as guide. Two days later we fell in with a party of Russian pelt-hunters, and thenceforward our party was augmented by one, a plump, ruddy fellow named Ivashka, who spoke some broken English and had picked up a decent smattering of the Siwash among the Behring traders. He did not seem sorry to part with his Yakut friends. He wanted to go to the Klondyke, and they did not.

"Furs are gold," they said, and they bought Ivashka's share of the spoils with which their sleds were laden, and then bade him a curt good-bye and started on the back trail.

"They don't seem sorry to part with the man!" I said to Wickham. "I wonder whether we have gained anything by letting him come along."

"I don't know as I've got much use for the fat beggar myself, either," said Wickham, "but Perry thinks we're going to get a cinch on the natives—that's how he puts it—by having an interpreter."

A few days later Wickham, by dint of skilful questioning, found out why the parting between Ivashka and his late companions had been devoid of emotion.

"They think him a Jonah," he told me. "They'd have killed him to change the luck, he says, if they hadn't been Christians—in their way. He brought bad luck on 'em in early May, by something he did at an Esquimaux summer camp, and since that day they've not had a pelt. You saw the sleds drew light. Not a pelt, and, what's more—they've been haunted!"

"That's the lie," said Perry, overhearing. "Haunted by the spook of an almighty big bull moose, with a bundle on its head. When I see that moose, gentlemen, I'll shoot him. But he ain't there, as the Tennessee man said when he caught the flea. By—gongs!"

Perry ran to the sleds, I knew for his rifle. I had my own gun and, throwing it to my shoulder, fired at the shoulder of the great hulking bulk that had loomed suddenly up against the yellow sunset sky (the darkness had come back and the nights were six hours long) on the higher side of a narrow wooded cañon. I could have sworn I heard the thud of the entering bullet, but the great bull moose had disappeared. We heard him crash through the brushwood, his lumbering gallop died away in the distance. We looked at one another—then at the stolid Ivashka, who turned away to fasten a thong of the harness of the leader of our dog-team.

"Did you see?" asked Wickham.

"Yes," I said.

"Odd, rather," said Wickham; "I hope the shooting luck won't change after this!"

"I've saw that there moose," said Perry, "and I'll allow as Ivashka ain't a liar after all. Yes, gentlemen, I've saw that moose with the bundle on his head, and as I said, I allow to shoot him. I've never buzzed a spook before, an' I guess, if the thing's to be done, I'm goin' to do it. But one man—or two men—has got to go on his trail, flying light in the baggage line. No Mahlemeuts, no sleds, a Winchester each, with cartridges an' a bag o' salt, a little flour, a tin dipper an' the sky for a bed-quilt." He caught my glance and read the eagerness in it. "You're my pardner," he said, and threw out a lean hand. "I take you, youngster, or I go alone!"

Wickham camped with the teams and sleds and Ivashka, and early next morning Perry and I, flying light in the

matter of baggage, set out. We crossed the cañon and picked up the track of great split hoofs, we pushed on inland, the timber growing greater and the streams shallower as we went. Twice we saw moose, a lonely cow and then a herd of five cows with some part-grown calves and a bull, but the bull carried no burden on his great palmated horns. We lived on ptarmigan and squirrel, and on the third day we ran down our quarry. Creeping up stealthily to windward of the huge beast, we found him standing in a covert, roaring with fury as he strove, as he had doubtless striven many times before—to get rid of the encumbrance on his head. It was a long bundle, bound with thongs, midway of the spreading antlers, branching to fourteen points and compassing seven feet within the tips. His eyes were red, his lean sides shewed the fret and torment of the incubus he bore. He roared and thrust with his horns this way and that, thrashing the branches in an ineffectual paroxysm of rage. Then Perry's rifle and mine cracked at the same instant, and the great beast staggered down upon his knuckled knees. My ball had crashed into his brain, while Perry's had passed clean through the shoulder into the heart. We yelled triumphantly, and the great bull threw back his strangely bedizened head and tried to answer in defiance as the light of life sank out of his little yellow eyes for ever. And we ran up.

Ran up and saw the strangest sight I have ever seen in these my thirty years of manhood. The body of an Inoit was bound upon the horns of the great bull moose. The parki was trimmed with white rabbit, there was a necklace of birds' feathers about the neck, and—

"Don't you see the top-knot tied with green ribbons? and the round lap to the parki skirt?" said Perry hoarsely. "It is—it has been a woman! Lord! them Eskimers has notions o' things!"

"It was a punishment, I suppose," said I, as we cut

the thongs with our hunting-knives and released the stiff little body. The eyes were open and staring, there were salmon-skin shoes, no bigger than a child's, upon the tiny feet.

"We'll take her back to camp an' bury her," said Perry. "As for the meat—leave it for the huskies or the timber wolves. I've no hankerin' for a steak of it myself."

I had none either. So we bound the poor little body upon a birch-pole and carried it back to where Wickham and the dog-team and Ivashka camped by the cañon.

"Me know that girl!" Ivashka said, after a long stare.

"*What!*" we cried, unanimous in astonishment. But Ivashka went on quite unconcernedly—

"She Inoit girl, name Ounaka, belong Fox tribe. Me an' my frens we meet Fox Inoit so far back as when the snow begin to melt——"

"That was airly in May, I guess?" said Perry.

"*Da!* We stop and eat and trade tabac with her people for *riiba*——"

"That's Russian for fish," said Wickham.

"And furs," went on Ivashka. "I make her my sweetheart—ask no leave. Big Chief man very angry—we make peace and go away—but I think this how he punish Ounaka when I go."

"Great snakes, man!" said Perry; "how can you *know* it is Ounaka?"

For answer Ivashka pulled at a soiled red leather string that was round the neck of the frozen, battered little body, and something came out that had been tucked away in what had once been a woman's bosom.

"That silver money—Russi rouble she much beg for. I sorry give, but else she no kind. Now I take it back again, because Ounaka got no use for it!"

"No, you won't!" said I.

"I'm damned if you do!" said Wickham, and Perry's

great, muscular hand gripped like a vice upon Ivashka's fat neck. And we buried poor Ounaka decently under a great pine tree with her silver rouble. Perry made Ivashka act as chief mourner.

"Since the gal knew no better than to think a heap of such a skunk as you," said Perry severely, "you'll do your duty by her—or take the consequences." And Ivashka preferred not to take the consequences.

"If—this queer start had happened in a civilised country," said Wickham that night, as we smoked our pipes beside the camp fire, "people would have talked about Fate and Destiny, and all like that."

"And poor little Ounaka would have been made into a heroine of Romance," said I.

"Oh, bless you, yes!" said Wickham. "Environment is everything. But at the first opportunity I suggest getting rid of Ivashka. I've got no use for that buck Russian, as Perry says."

No more had I. However, we were rid of Ivashka soon afterwards. That is, however, another story.

THE VENGEANCE OF OUNAKA

Ivashka had left his comrades, the Yakut fur-hunters, to join a party of white sportsmen—a Canadian, an Englishman, and an American—bound for the Klondyke. He spoke a little English and some Esquimaux, and therefore those people had taken him on. Ivashka was greedy, selfish and sly, and, like all Russian Yakuts, worshipped the silver rouble. No banknote, not the French gold piece of twenty francs, or the British sovereign—reliable currency the whole world over—possessed the charm of the silver rouble in Ivashka's twinkling eyes. The Turkish gold lira he knew something of—his mother had always worn one in her nose—but the silver rouble of the Great White Tsar, worth about 1*s.* 9*d.*, though nominally valued at 2*s.* 1*d.*, was Ivashka's god.

Once he had given a dinted silver-rouble—depreciated Russian currency—with a hole in it, to an Inoit woman of the Fox tribe, named Ounaka, in a lover-like mood of generosity.

The month was May. Ounaka—in spite, or rather because, of a flattish nose, broad, copper-coloured cheeks, an ivory spatula in her lower lip, and a top-knot of coarse black hair, coquettishly tied up with green ribbon, which is the Inoit symbol of giddiness—Ounaka was enticing.

Thus the silver rouble changed hands. Next day Ivashka left the summer lodge of the Foxes, and travelled on with the traders, but Ounaka remained behind; and, having loved without the permission of her superiors, the

big men of the tribe, met trouble. In this wise: that, having taken a great bull moose alive in a swamp, the fathers caused the young men of the Fox tribe to bind the sinner crosswise upon the great beast's spreading antlers; and then, cutting the thongs that bound it, set the creature free. That was done in May; and in July, when the mosquito sang and the blue-bead hyacinths were a-bloom in the moss of the tundra, Perry the American tracked down a bull moose with a strange burden on its horns, and shot the tormented beast with an explosive bullet from his Winchester.

Thus Ounaka and Ivashka met again. There was little in the stiffened, dried-up little mummy to recall the plump, coquettish charms of the Siwash girl; but the silver rouble, yet hanging about her cervical vertebra by its leather string, was an indisputable witness to identity.

Ivashka reclaimed the token with greedy hands; but Perry the American wrested it from him with kicks. There were more kicks when Ivashka told his story; and he was compelled, under threat of severer punishment, to officiate as chief mourner at Ounaka's funeral, for they buried her before they pulled out afresh upon the Klondyke trail, striking their summer camp in a July blizzard—a mere trifle, as blizzards go.

Ivashka was in low spirits, not because, in some unaccountable way, he had become unpopular, but because of his silver rouble left buried in the half-thawed soil under the big pine. There was gold waiting at the Klondyke, for Rampart City was now but sixty miles distant; but a rouble in the hand was worth to Ivashka many beans of gold buried in Bonanza Creek.

This was in 1897, when the wonderful stories published in the *Victoria Daily Colonist* had caught all men by the eyes; and even the Canadian, the Englishman, and Perry, the American who had kicked Ivashka and was likely to

repeat the exercise, would pull out the tattered rags of columns sliced from that veracious newspaper, and read them by the light of the hot night sunshine, while the billy boiled on the camp-fire. $800 in one pan of dirt; $125,000 on the dump at one mine, ready to wash when the spring came back: these marvels formed the staple of conversation.

To-night, Ivashka calculated, when the dogs had been fed and the men had eaten, and one of the three bottles of bad vodka bought in May from the Yakuts had yielded a sparing tot to each, the ragged slips of newspaper would be sure to come out, and the gold-talk would begin again. Then it would be very easy to make the twelve-mile journey back to the big pine, even in the boggy moss that made such heavy going.

Ivashka's slitty eyes twinkled soberly at the reflection. He had been kicked, he would be kicked again, but the reason why he had been kicked would be secure in his waist-pouch. All turned out exactly as he had foreseen. He glided like a shadow into the bush, then ran swiftly, stooping, on the back trail, as Perry stirred a wet log and sent up a column of smoke. From one black patch of spruce to another patch Ivashka ran; from shadow into hot, bright sunshine, and from sunshine into shadow, silently as a timber wolf over the thick, deep, splashy Arctic moss, over stretches of rock-humped gravel.

It was night, and the perfume of the blue-bead dwarf-hyacinths and the orange-yellow briar-roses was sweet upon the air. The birds were silent; but the mosquitoes sang, following on millions of invisible wings the plashy trail of their human supper.

There was the big pine; and underneath, in a shallow grave pickaxed by two of Ivashka's three masters out of the iron-hard frozen gravel that one found under the flower-gemmed moss, lay Ounaka, the Siwash woman.

Ivashka was glad he had come those twelve miles through the hot, bright night. The desire of the silver rouble lulled his Yakut fear of spooks to sleep. He drew out his knife, squatted down beside the heap of stones and moss that covered the grave, and began to take the stones away —only from the upper part, because the rouble had hung about the neck of Ounaka by a leather string.

When Ivashka had made a hole a foot deep his knuckles touched something icy-cold and clammy. A shaft of hot, bright sunlight struck down into the hole. There was the lower lip of Ounaka, with an ivory spatula sticking in it; there the angle of her chin, and the shadow it cast upon the beaded edge of her cotton inner shirt, and the ra[illegible]it-fur trimming at the neck of her parki. He began to feel about for the string of the silver rouble. Then he remembered that the American had twisted the string about one of her stiff wrists and forced the coin into one of the rigid hands, that, when she had been found, were bound before her with thongs of deer-leather. More stones and moss must be moved before the rouble could be come at.

Ivashka was vexed, but he set to work. Presently he could thrust his arm down, feeling his way along the half-frozen outline of one of the dead arms. Now he reached the hands, felt the taut string, and grinned. The rouble was his again. Then, as he pulled at the string, and slid his supple, squat fingers between the stiff palms of the corpse and touched the piece of money, something happened. What but this: that he could not draw his arm back again! To the thoroughly frightened Ivashka it seemed that the dead hands had shut down on his living one like the steel spring of a European trap, and Ounaka had him prisoner.

"*Ou-ie!*" squealed Ivashka, for the corpse's fingers hurt terribly. He remembered religion then; and as the sweat ran down his fat cheeks he began to pray to St.

Sergius and all the Russian saints he could remember. But dead Ounaka held fast. The long, scorching hours of the sunlit night went by, and still Ivashka pleaded and prayed, and still Ounaka held him. His voice was nearly gone from shrieking, his eyes were bursting from his head, when the birds began to sing and the white anemones in the moss opened their petals.

It was day, and the masters of Ivashka must have missed him. Would they come back to seek, or would they pull out on the Klondyke trail and go on without him? Then he remembered his Mahlemeut, Chu. He had tied the dog securely last night to prevent its following him, but, once unloosed, it would soon lead the way to its master. Ivashka felt relieved. Ounaka was a witch, but Europeans were not afraid of witches.

He fancied he heard Chu howling in the distance—Mahlemeuts do not bark. He saw a grey shape glide between the trunks of the pines; he saw it again—again! Then he knew that the things were timber-wolves, and that those were the forerunners of a pack. And presently—presently the pinewood was full of lean, grey shapes, and the wolf-pack, moving silently as a flood, stole out beyond the edges of the wood into the centre of the open space where the big pine grew. Ivashka yelled, and flung a stone, and they broke and scattered, but always massed again, to recommence that slow-moving approach towards the newly opened grave.

Ivashka knew that wolves would not dig up and devour the dead body while fresh meat was to be had. He had a sickening moment of imagination, in which he saw himself torn, rent, devoured by those sharp wolf-teeth, hurried in reeking scraps down those hungry wolf-gullets. Probably the wolves would leave nothing at all of Ivashka except his hunting-knife, and the snow-shoes that had been strapped upon his shoulder-pack. Even his native

water-boots would be eaten; and his waist-pouch, containing tobacco and fish-hooks, and a little bag of those beloved silver roubles, would be dragged away into the forest.

Then a desperate thought occurred to him. The hunting-knife was of tried temper, a good blade of Russian steel hafted with walrus-tusk. He would use the knife in his desperate need for a desperate attempt at freedom. He ran the point of it into the sleeve of his parki, and ripped the stout leather, whining and sweating and praying, and bared a space below the elbow, and shut his teeth and dealt left-handedly a chopping blow. A shriek burst from him with the blood, and he hacked again, screaming, and again; and as the hot blood spurted, the leader of the wolf-pack leapt, snapping as he did so, and the parki of Ivashka was torn away at the shoulder. And with the piece torn away by those savage fangs went a strip of flesh, dripping with hot blood. Another wolf leaped, snapping, and Ivashka stabbed him in the throat, and he fell back, howling, but yet another and another attacked, and then the pack closed in.

Meanwhile Chu, who had been kicked and beaten by Ivashka into the belief that there was nobody like the Yakut in all Alaska, was howling his way along his master's trail at the end of a harness-thong held by Perry, the American. Through groves of birches and forests of pine, past pool and creek, over wet, mossy tundra and dry gravel, the Mahlemeut led, while the Canadian and the Englishman waited at the camp. Perry had no particular ambition to rescue Ivashka from the hands of Siwashes, or the clutches of a bear, or a bog; but as a matter of course, a man being missing, he had set out to find him.

The sun beat down in waves of fire, the steam rose up rom the marshy places, the stretches of burning grave

were scorching to the feet by the time Chu, bristling with the knowledge he had no words to impart, dragged Perry into the circular arena where the fight was going on under the big pine. Ivashka had forgotten his fears in the bitter intoxication of battle. He sang his death-song as he stabbed and slew, and the rags that remained on his torn and crimsoned body were crimson too, and the gravel about him was a shining red marsh. Seven wolves lay dead, and three yelped and writhed in the last agony; but their grey companions took no present heed of them.

Then the first shot from Perry's Winchester rang out, and the American emptied the breech with deadly precision among Ivashka's foes. Before he could cram the chambers again the pack began to retreat. They drew off, snarling, amongst the pines, and then were seen no more. And Chu quitted the American and galloped forward, and then stopped, throwing up his shaggy head, and howling long and dismally.

Perry went over and knelt by what was left of Ivashka. The death-song had passed into silence, and the red hunting-knife lay on the ground. Perry tried to remove the mangled body, for the purpose of burying it near the grave of the Siwash woman. But Ounaka held her prize. The tough leather of the parki sleeve, the stout straps Ivashka wore about his wrist, had been caught in a bunch of iron fish-hooks that Ounaka, like all Siwash women, wore at her girdle. So Perry buried Ivashka in the same trench that held his summer-love.

When he had piled back the stones and moss, carefully, and without haste, though time was valuable, he rose up and took his hat off to the occupant of the grave, dead Ounaka, who, alive, would have laughed to split at the Chichalko's queer way of showing respect, and delivered a brief congratulatory address.

He hadn't had a notion a mere Siwash could have been

so smart, he said. He had allowed something uncommon was likely to happen when Ounaka came waltzing around camp on the head of that darned old moose; and he himself, when he heard the story, had calculated on making that skunk Ivashka drink the cup of retribution. When he lighted out on the trail, he added, meaning to beat the said skunk into pulp should he find him in possession of what he persisted in calling the half-dollar, he had no idea that the skunk had been made to ante up in so appropriate and ingenious a manner.

"And I take off my hat to you, sis, for it!" he ended. "You've taught that young man a lesson, you have, an' he is now sayin' it over, without book, in Kingdom Come. Where that may be located I don't take it upon me to guess. But, dead as you are, you're equal to a live American girl; an' dead as he is, he fought like a white man. An' that's the handsomest thing I can say of either of you."

Then, having ended his funeral oration, Perry, dragging the unwilling lead-dog Chu, struck out for camp.

THE END

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